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PUSA**

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ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA.

WRITTEN EVIDENCE.

Vol. VI.—Part 1.

ASSAM AND THE DOOARS.

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1930.

NOTE TO PART 1.

In this part is reproduced the bulk of the evidence submitted to the Commission in the form of written memoranda in reply to the list of subjects circulated in August 1929. In preparing this volume the Commission have sought to retain all matter likely to be of permanent interest to students of the subject, and not available elsewhere. Material supplied to the Commission which has already been printed and published elsewhere has in general not been reproduced. Where memoranda have been abridged all considerable omissions have been indicated in the text.

TERMS OF REFERENCE.

"To inquire into and report on the existing conditions of labour in industrial undertakings and plantations in British India, on the health, efficiency and standard of living of the workers, and on the relations between employers and employed, and to make recommendations."

NOTE.—“Industrial undertaking” for the purpose of the Commission is interpreted as in Article I of the Washington Hours Convention, which is as follows:—

“For the purpose of this Convention, the term ‘industrial undertaking’ includes particularly:—

- “ (a) Mines, quarries, and other works for the extraction of minerals from the earth.
- “ (b) Industries in which articles are manufactured, altered, cleaned, repaired, ornamented, finished, adapted for sale, broken up or demolished, or in which materials are transformed ; including shipbuilding and the generation, transformation and transmission of electricity or motive power of any kind.
- “ (c) Construction, reconstruction, maintenance, repair, alteration, or demolition of any building, railway, tramway, harbour, dock, pier, canal, inland waterway, road, tunnel, bridge, viaduct, sewer, drain, well, telegraphic or telephonic installation, electrical undertaking, gaswork, waterwork or other work of construction, as well as the preparation for or laying the foundations of any such work or structure.
- “ (d) Transport of passengers or goods by road, rail, sea, or inland waterway, including the handling of goods at docks, quays, wharves or warehouses, but excluding transport by hand.”

The competent authority in each country shall define the line of division which separates industry from commerce and agriculture.

MISCELL.

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* This word should be read as indicating generally the changes in composition of the labour staff of an undertaking.

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- (i) Existing practice.
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GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM.

INTRODUCTION.

Assam is not an industrial province. It is an agricultural province with no large towns or industrial centres. Its largest and most important industry, tea cultivation, is mainly agricultural. Apart from the tea industry, the only large labour concerns are the coal mines and oilfields and a match factory. There are a few scattered saw mills, rice mills, oil mills, engineering workshops and printing presses, but they are small and of little importance in this province. Secondly, as an agricultural province with land still available for settlement and no pressure of population, Assam has practically no indigenous industrial labouring classes. There is, of course, some indigenous casual labour, both skilled and unskilled, in the small towns and villages to meet the ordinary needs of the people, viz., agricultural labourers, porters, carpenters, blacksmiths, etc., but for the industries of importance labour has to be imported from other parts of India. The main difficulty which industry in Assam has to face is the labour supply, and the labour employed is a heterogeneous mixture of races and creeds drawn from almost every part of India.

This is the labour force in Assam which will chiefly engage the attention of the Royal Commission, and the Government of Assam propose to confine their remarks mainly to this labour force in discussing particular problems in the memoranda.

2. There is one point which must always be borne in mind when the several questions affecting the condition of labour are examined. The imported labour is almost entirely illiterate and composed of men and women with a low standard of living, conservative by nature, suspicious of change, and excitable. In dealing with such people caution is necessary. They are not an intelligent body of men who desire to raise their own standard of living and can appreciate and make good use of any improvements introduced for their benefit. On the contrary, the tendency of this labour force too often is to treat with suspicion and resent any change that is introduced, however well intentioned, and their resentment is quickly fanned into violence. A large proportion of this labour force has little or no ambition to improve its standard of living. It is content with little and does not want to do any more work than is necessary to secure that little. Any large increase in the wages rates would often mean less work or a dissipation of the additional earnings. Changes introduced by the employers, which were directed to raise the labourers' standard of life, would often be suspected and resented. What is needed is the education of the labour force to the appreciation of a higher standard of living, when they will want more and be prepared to work for it and make good use of their earnings. The very nature of the labour force makes progress in that direction slow, but it is only by such progress that any lasting improvement can be effected. It is impossible to introduce suddenly measures suited to the educated labour of other parts of the world. The ground must be prepared before the seed is sown, and it is the preparation of the ground that at present demands the most attention.

I.—Recruitment.

1. *Origin of Labour.*—The labour force for the large industries of the province is almost entirely imported in its origin. Some of the resident labour force in tea estates are the children of imported labourers born in Assam. The resident labour in tea estates is supplemented during the non-cultivation season by the employment of some local labour, but that labour is mostly drawn from the *ex-tea* garden imported labour which has taken up land and settled down in Assam.

The imported labour for tea gardens is drawn mainly from the United Provinces, Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa, Bengal and Madras. In recent years some labour has been introduced from Bombay.

The following table shows the total number imported for the tea industry during 's ending 1927-28 :

| — | 1923-24. | 1924-25. | 1925-26. | 1926-27. | 1927-28. |
|-------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| . | 25,902 | 19,106 | 19,720 | 27,295 | 24,124 |
| .. | 8,705 | 7,842 | 7,452 | 10,566 | 10,027 |
| .. | 7,525 | 6,779 | 5,837 | 7,833 | 8,694 |
| Total | .. | 41,862 | 33,727 | 33,009 | 42,845 |

The total resident labour force in tea estates in 1927-28 consisted of 585,104 adults and 440,117 children. The nationality and sex of the adult labour force is shown in the following statement:—

| Nationality. | Men. | Women. | Total. |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| United Provinces, Bengal and Bihar.. | 112,752 | 97,920 | 210,672 |
| Chota Nagpur and Santhal Pargana .. | 91,378 | 90,101 | 181,479 |
| Central Provinces .. | 39,380 | 34,957 | 74,337 |
| Madras .. | 34,682 | 24,152 | 58,834 |
| Assam .. | 29,188 | 24,076 | 53,264 |
| Others .. | 4,507 | 2,011 | 6,518 |
| Total .. | 311,887 | 273,217 | 585,104 |

The variations in the total volume of immigration and the numbers drawn from the several areas in different years are due to local conditions in the recruiting areas. Bad harvests and scarcity lead to increased emigration from the affected areas to Assam.

The labour force in the mines is even more heterogeneous. It is partly drawn from the same sources as tea garden labour and partly from different classes, Pathans, Nepalis, Punjabis, Makranis and even Chinese.

In the oilfields at Digboi about 22 per cent. of the labour is obtained from Assam. The rest is imported mainly from Bengal and the United Provinces.

2. *Contact with Villages.*—Contact with the home villages is maintained through the system of recruitment to be described later. Some of the tea garden labour is imported on short-term agreements, on the expiry of which the labourers can if they desire return to their homes. Others who are recruited with no definite period of agreement can and often do leave the gardens and return to their homes. A large proportion, however, of the imported labourers stays for a long period in Assam, and many after serving a period of years on tea gardens take up lands for cultivation and settle permanently in the province. The latest figures available show that 316,207 acres in the Assam Valley had been taken up for cultivation by *ex-tea* garden labourers, and these figures are probably not complete.

Labour in the mines is mostly short-term labour. For the Kongon mine in the Naga Hills some of the workmen are recruited nominally for three years, but no attempt is made to enforce the agreement. The labourers in the mines in the Lakhimpur district are engaged for periods varying from 100 to 425 days, and are free to return home then or to stay for another period. There is a greater tendency now for the mine labourers to return home after completion of their contracts, but many return again for a further spell of work.

The imported labour in the oilfields at Digboi usually works for short periods and then returns home, to return again later or to send their friends. The labour population there is constantly changing, the average number discharged and engaged in a month varying from 400 to 500 in a total force of about 6,000.

3. *Methods of Recruitment.*—(i) Recruitment of imported labour for tea estates in Assam is, except in Bombay, carried on under the provisions of so much of Act VI of 1901, as is still in force.

This system of recruitment may be briefly described as follows:—Recruitment is carried on by garden sardars, i.e., men employed as labourers in the tea estate and sent back to their country with their employer's certificate countersigned by a magistrate authorizing them to recruit from their own country. The work of these sardars is supervised by local agents in the recruiting districts, most of whom work under the Tea Districts Labour Association. The Assam Labour Board appointed by Government generally supervises recruitment.

In the Bombay Presidency, Act VI of 1901 is not in force. There the Government of Bombay have allowed recruitment provided the emigrants are produced before a magistrate. Agents other than garden sardars are allowed in that Presidency.

For the Kongon mine in the Naga Hills district, to which Act VI of 1901 does not apply, labour is recruited through contractors belonging to the areas where the labour is obtained. For the other mines about half the imported labour is recruited in exactly the same way as the tea garden labour. Similar methods are also adopted for the recruitment of other classes of labour from areas to which Act VI of 1901 does not apply, e.g., Makranis from Karachi and Pathans from Peshawar.

For the oilfields at Digboi no recruiting agency is now required. The industry has established such a strong connection with the recruiting areas that it is unnecessary to send sardars or employ any agency.

(ii) The question of improving the present system of recruitment will be discussed later in paragraph (6).

(iii) The question of the establishment of public employment agencies was considered by this Government in 1921. As has already been stated, the problem in Assam is not that of finding employment for surplus labour but of securing labour from outside the province. Consequently there is no room for public employment agencies in Assam. As regards the establishment of such agencies in the recruiting districts the Government of Assam in 1921 were of opinion that this would open the door to the reappearance of the professional recruiter with all the abuses that attended his operations in the old days before such recruitment was prohibited. The Government of Assam then held that such employment agencies, if considered advisable, should be established only in selected areas and under adequate supervision and control.

As will be seen later, the Government of Assam have recently advocated a relaxation of the present system of recruitment so as to allow additional recruiting agencies working under supervision. If effect be given to this proposal, there would be less objection to the establishment of employment agencies in the recruiting districts, provided that they were subject to supervision. The provinces, however, in which recruitment is conducted are mainly concerned in this question, although Assam is closely affected as any irregular recruitment or recruitment of an unsuitable type of labour results in unrest and disturbances in this province.

4. *Extent and Effects of Disturbance of Family Life.*—The system of recruitment now in force in the tea industry directly encourages the importation of families, and the statistics already furnished show that women are almost as numerous as men in the resident labour population in tea estates.

In the mines and oilfields there is much less work for women, and the population of women is much lower. The men recruited from the same classes and under the same conditions as the tea garden labourers often bring up their families, and many of these women live on the coal and oilfields without the necessity of work. Many Makranis also bring their wives. Pathans and Chinese practically never bring their wives. In the Lakhimpur district no ill-effects appear to result from the disruption of family life. Very little trouble on this account at any rate is reported. The Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, however, reports as regards the Kongon mine in his district that it leads to much prostitution and temporary alliances with local women.

5. *Recruitment of Seamen.*—This does not concern Assam. Seamen are recruited from Sylhet, but this Government are not directly concerned with the recruitment or acquainted with the system in force.

6. *Recruitment for Assam.*—The question of the recruitment of labour for Assam has recently been the subject of correspondence with the Government of India in connection with the proposal to repeal what remains of Act VI of 1901 and to substitute a new Act. The views of this Government have been explained in their letters No. Immgn.-215/5705G.J., dated the 1st September, 1927, No. 884G.J., dated the 8th February, 1929, and No. Immgn.-61/1344G.J., dated 5th March, 1929, copies of which are given in Appendix A of the memoranda. It will be seen that this Government have advocated a relaxation of the existing restrictions in the interests of the industry, but are convinced of the necessity of retaining some supervision and control in the interests of the labourers and of the employers, as well as for the sake of peace and order in the province. It is unnecessary to repeat here the detailed arguments given in the correspondence.

7. *Unemployment.*—Unemployment amongst the labouring classes, as already explained, is not a problem which affects Assam, and this Government are not in a position to make any remarks on the subject.

8. *Labour "Turn-over."*—Such information as this Government have as regards the duration of employment and the extent of casual employment has already been furnished. There are no figures available to show the average duration of employment or the extent to which casual labour is employed.

9. *Apprentices Act, 1850.*—No use is made of this Act in Assam.

II.—Staff Organization.

11. *Selection of Managing Staff.*—The coal mines, oilfields and most of the tea estates have been started and are maintained by British capital, and the superior managing staff is British, recruited directly from England. In some cases control is exercised through managing agents in Calcutta, while other concerns are directly under the directors in England.

Indian-owned tea estates are managed either directly by the proprietor or by some Indian manager appointed by him or by the Company owning the estate. Europeans have occasionally been appointed as Superintendents in Indian-owned gardens.

12. *Recruitment and Training of Subordinate Supervising Staff.*—In the coal mines and oilfields the subordinate supervising staff is partly European and partly Indian. In the tea industry it is entirely Indian and drawn from the so-called *bhadralok** class, except for posts of sardars or foremen who are drawn from the labour force. The labour force as now constituted is almost entirely illiterate and drawn from primitive races in different parts of India. There is therefore little scope at present for any labourer to rise above the rank of foreman. Conditions are different on the oilfields at Digboi where men taken on as unskilled labour can be trained and rise to posts of drillers on a scale of pay rising from Rs. 45 to Rs. 90 a month. There are 60 drillers employed by the Assam Oil Company, of whom 60 per cent. are promoted men.

13.—*Relations between Staff and Rank and File.*—The relations are satisfactory. Apart from economic strikes, conflict occasionally has arisen in the past and will arise in the future, due sometimes to want of tact or bad handling on the part of the management, sometimes to misconduct on the part of the subordinate staff, but more often to misunderstanding or to the deliberate incitement of the labourers by some discontented workmen.

There are no Works Committees in Assam so far as the Government are aware.

15. *Contractors as Intermediaries.*—Except in the railways, where labour for construction work is usually engaged through contractors, and in some mines, contractors are rarely employed in the industries of Assam. They may be employed occasionally for the execution of some road or engineering work. They are employed also for such work by the Public Works Department of the Government and by the local boards and municipalities of the province. For earthwork on roads, etc., the contractors employ men of the *nunia* caste who specialise in such work and annually visit Assam in the cold weather for employment. They move from place to place as the work takes them and camp at the site of their work. In other cases the workmen employed by contractors are usually local men, who live in their own homes. Little control is exercised or needed over the working conditions of such labour for the reason that where labour is so scarce, a contractor would not keep his labour if they disliked the conditions under which they worked. Contractors are also employed in the timber trade for the felling and extraction of timber. They often engage Nepali sawyers, some of whom are imported from outside Assam while others visit Assam of their own accord to take up such work. These men are quick to move off elsewhere, if they are not satisfied with the conditions provided for them by the contractor, and that in itself is a sufficient safeguard. In fact the Assam Government have had very few complaints from this class of labour.

It is only in the case of labour imported by a contractor from a distance that any abuse might occur and in Assam the employment of such labour under contractors is practically confined to railway construction and to the Kongou mine. In the Kongou mine most of the labour is recruited through and works under contractors.

In the mines in the Lakhimpur district most of the underground work is done through the agency of contractors, but the labour employed is the company's labour and not the contractor's labour and is housed and looked after by the company. The system has been introduced on account of the difficulty of supervision underground. The company in such cases pays direct to the men the wages for the daily task and the surplus for additional work is paid to the contractor who distributes it among the men who have earned it.

The local labour employed in the oilfields at Digboi is also employed through contractors. This labour is looked after and housed by the contractor but the houses are usually built on the company's land and the company insists on them being kept in a sanitary condition and provides the conservancy arrangements and water-supply. These labourers are at liberty to take payment direct from the company if they so prefer.

III.—Housing.

16. *Extent to which Housing is Provided.*—Free quarters are provided for all resident employees of tea estates, both the labour force and the managing and subordinate supervising staff. Such non-resident labour as is employed is casual labour which comes in from the adjoining villages and lives in its own houses. In the mines and oilfields free quarters are provided for the labour force. In the oilfields the supervising staff is also provided with free quarters. The Assam Railways and Trading Company, which owns the mines in the Lakhimpur district and the Dibrugarh-Sadiya Railway, charges a small rent for the quarters provided for some of the supervising staff.

* " *Lhadralok* " means of respectable parentage. It corresponds to what in the U.K. is known as the 'black coat' class.

18. *Nature of Accommodation provided in each Class.*—The nature of the accommodation in tea estates naturally varies. In the smaller concerns or in newly opened estates without much capital, the housing accommodation is not of so good a type as in larger well-established concerns backed by a large capital. There is also a diversity of system which has been described in the following extract from the report of a Committee of Enquiry appointed in 1921-22:—

"There is considerable diversity in the system of housing on tea estates. In some gardens coolies live in separate houses with a vegetable garden attached to each, and in others in more or less congested barracks. In fact, broadly speaking, there are two systems, the system of barrack lines and that of the *bustee* or small village. The former prevails on gardens where the location of a large labour force in a small area is more or less obligatory, and the latter, where more space is available for groups of houses constituting a scattered hamlet or village. The Committee endorse the opinion expressed by the Assam Labour Committee of 1906, in discussing the necessity for greater freedom of labour: 'Most of the aboriginal or semi-aboriginal races object to close contact with men of other castes; in their own country they lived in separate villages or *tolas*. It is repugnant for them to live in a common barrack. Every facility will have to be given to separate castes to form their own little hamlets and assimilate as far as possible their life on the tea garden to their life in their own country.' Unfortunately on some large estates owing to want of foresight there is no room for hamlets, any more than for rice cultivation, grazing and fuel reserves, as the main area of the grant is under tea cultivation. Barrack lines, especially in the Assam Valley, are usually substantial structures, often with iron roofs and brick walls. It is probable that where the coolie is compelled to live in congested barrack lines under more or less artificial conditions there is a tendency towards more rigid disciplinary methods, as perhaps is inevitable in the interests of sanitation alone. Speaking generally, every effort is made to provide the coolie with good houses and the initial and repair cost of lines must often be considerable. In some estates in Sibsagar the system of building barrack lines abutting on the public road does not seem to be conducive either to health or comfort, but in such cases there is probably a limited choice of sites owing to the extent of the area taken up by tea. There are gardens where coolies are allowed to build their own houses, thatching-grass and other building materials being available free from the grant. The Tara Tea Company on the eastern verge of the Dooom-Dooma area affords an interesting example of both systems. The estate consists of 3,600 acres, of which 1,200 acres are under tea. There is one set of barrack lines with iron roofs inhabited by East Coast Uriya coolies. A staff of sweepers is maintained and iron latrines are provided which are said to be used by 80 per cent. of these coolies. There are three sets of widely scattered *bustee* lines which are really coolie villages with *baris* and cultivation on high and low land adjacent. In these hamlets the coolies build their own houses and receive an advance of Rs. 5 in the first instance to enable them to do so; a large proportion of the labour force live in these hamlets and all have an option and no one is compelled to live in the barracks. The Cuttack Uriyas, however, are said to prefer the barrack lines while coolies from the Kalahandi State and aboriginal or semi-aboriginal labourers prefer the village system. About 300 acres of rice land are available for which 4 annas a *bigha** is charged and no rent is charged for high land attached to the hamlets on which crops of vegetables and mustard are grown. This estate enjoys exceptional advantages. Managers differ as to whether a coolie prefers to live in houses provided by the garden or built by himself and opinions are probably coloured by individual experience of particular districts and classes of labour. It is possible that coolies of some castes are gregarious and prefer to live in barrack lines, most coolies, however, particularly those belonging to aboriginal races, prefer detached houses built by themselves, and like to live with people of their own race or community."

In Assam the tea estates are regularly inspected by district and sub-divisional officers. Although the legal powers of interference have been curtailed by the abolition of indentured labour and the repeal of so much of Act VI of 1901 as related to such labour, still in practice the inspecting officers do invariably report on the conditions of the "lines" or quarters. They are quick to call attention to the need of improvement and the management is generally ready to the extent of its means to effect such improvements as are considered necessary. The managing authorities realize that the labour force will work better if their material wants are well looked after, and that any failure in this respect may lead not only to a poor output of work but also to an exodus of the labourers.

The housing arrangements in the coal and oil fields are quite satisfactory. In the coal fields in the Lakhimpur district and also in the oil fields the houses are usually *pucca* and of a good type.

* A *bigha* is one-third of an acre.

19. *Utilization of Accommodation.* 20. *Rent Rates.* 21. *Other Problems, e.g., sub-letting and eviction.*—In view of the conditions described, there is little to be said on these questions. The imported labour has no alternative but to utilize the accommodation provided. No rent is charged to the labourers. Eviction only exists to the extent that a labourer may be moved from one house to another.

IV.—Health.

23. *General Health Conditions of Workers.*—In the tea industry there has been a steady improvement in the health conditions of the labour force. In the year 1927-28 the birth-rate in the Assam valley was 32.4 per mille and the death-rate 20.61, while the corresponding figures in the Surma valley were 31.73 and 18.66. In both divisions the birth-rate was higher and the death-rate lower than the provincial rates. In the districts of Cachar in the Surma valley and of Lakhimpur in the Assam valley, the death-rate among children was almost the same as among adults. In Sylhet in the Surma valley and in Darrang and Nowgong in the Assam valley, the rate for children was considerably lower than the rate for adults, while in Kamrup and Sibsagar it was higher. There was a very high death-rate among children recorded in Goalpara district, but that district has only a few newly opened gardens with a very small labour force, the total number of children being only 834.

The large majority of the labour force in tea estates is employed out of doors, only a small proportion working in the factory and other buildings. Many of the labourers and their dependents arrive from the country in a very poor condition, but they are treated carefully and given no work or only light work until they have recovered their strength.

No exact figures for the vital statistics in the coal and oil fields have been obtained. The number of deaths in the oilfields in the year ending 30th June, 1929, was 115. The working strength varied from month to month and the average daily working strength is not known. Taking the mean of the figures furnished for two months the death-rate would be about 18 per mille. In the several collieries the average rate was about 35 per mille. Accidents help to raise the death-rate in the mines. The birth-rate both in the mines and oilfields is low on account of the small proportion of women.

Rice is the staple diet of the tea garden labour force and of most of the labour employed in other industries in Assam.

24 and 25. *Extent to which Medical Facilities are provided and utilized.*—In all tea estates medical attendance and medicine are provided free for all classes of employees. There are hospitals on most of the estates, which are usually in charge of qualified Indian doctors. The hospitals and medical arrangements in a large number of estates are supervised by European medical officers, each of whom has a group of gardens in his charge. In all garden hospitals diet, and in many clothing, is provided free. The hospitals generally are well equipped. In some of the smaller or newly opened estates the hospital accommodation is inadequate and in a few only untrained compounders are in charge. In some of the older and larger estates also there is room for improvement in the hospital accommodation, but unfortunately that criticism would apply also to some of the public institutions of this kind. Well equipped hospitals are provided, also for the labour force in the mines and oilfields, and medical attendance and medicine are provided free. The labour force in all cases, both men and women, avails itself freely of the medical facilities provided, so far as the acceptance of treatment is concerned. There is, however, some reluctance to go into hospital as an in-door patient.

There are, of course, public dispensaries and hospitals maintained by the local boards in the vicinity of some estates, but in view of the facilities provided by their employers the labour force rarely has occasion to resort to them.

26. *Latrines and other Sanitary Arrangements.*—The tea estates are not required by law to provide latrine or urinals for their labour force. It is unnecessary to insist on such provision in all cases, as these estates are in rural areas and many contain stretches of waste land to which the labourers can resort without danger to the general health. In the villages also there are no conservancy arrangements of this nature. The provision of latrines is required by law only in the case of a factory or a mine. In the case of tea estates, the factory is only that building or a part of building in which machinery is used. The Factories Act requires the provision of latrines in factories unless they are exempted by the inspector. In Assam, out of 591 registered factories in 1927, 549 were tea estate factories. The question of requiring factories in Assam to provide latrines was considered in 1912 in consultation with the Chief Inspector of Factories. An inspector who was deputed to make enquiries submitted the following report: "With reference to the factories in Assam where latrines or urinals are not provided, I made it a matter of special enquiry during my inspection there last month to see if any offence existed in or around the factory compounds,

but in no case could I find just cause for complaint or for the necessity for altering the sanitary arrangements. Further, I made it a point to look into the latrines, which are good structures, provided by the Dibrugarh-Sadiya railway for their employees, and in few cases could I find much evidence of their being used at all. I am informed the various peoples in that district prefer using the jungle, which is unlimited." On receipt of that report the chief inspector said that the erection of latrines in the factories of Assam at present was needless and to enforce them would mean an unnecessary waste of money with no corresponding benefit. He, therefore, approved the exemption of the factories in this province from the provision of Section 13 of the Act. The Government agreed with the views of the chief inspector then and the position has not changed since.

Although it is unnecessary to prescribe by law the provision of latrines for factories or plantations in Assam, it does not thereby follow that there are not cases in which such provision is advisable. In fact, latrines have been provided in some estates. The question was investigated by the Committee of enquiry in 1921-22 and their recommendations are here reproduced :—

" The installation of a conservancy system on tea gardens in Assam has not advanced beyond the experimental stage, though in the last year or two considerable progress has been effected. Medical officers advocate the desirability of conducting an intensive campaign against hookworm infection by this method. The committee note with satisfaction that many managers are in favour of some system of conservancy. Several witnesses, however, have stated that the coolie will not use latrines, but in most cases it was found that latrines had never been given a trial. On the other hand, there is the positive testimony of medical officers and managers who have actually introduced latrines that they are a success in so far that coolies do use them with the result that in many cases there is an appreciable fall in the incidence of anaemia. The committee have seen latrines of different kinds in use. On Tara garden, in Lakhimpur, the bucket system of latrines is in vogue. This necessitates the maintenance of a staff of sweepers. Dr. Joly has pronounced this system satisfactory. At Panitola there is a system of *aqua* privy. The manager said it was regularly used and that the health of the adjoining coolie lines had much improved. At Gotonga, members of the committee were much impressed by a septic tank erected by Messrs. Bird and Company, which had cost about Rs. 8,000. The manager expressed his satisfaction with it, and avowed his intention of installing a similar septic tank in another of his gardens. He was further of opinion that he could build one for about half the cost of the Gotonga tank. In places where latrines exist, the committee have been assured that, with few exceptions, the coolies do not object to using them. There is, of course, always a difficulty about children. It is not, however, to be expected that latrines will be regularly used unless they are kept clean. Sometimes there may be a difficulty in enlisting a staff of sweepers. Dr. Joly made the pertinent remark that unless managers themselves are interested in such schemes and have a reasonable belief in their success, there is little hope of progress. In some gardens trench latrines have been tried. In such cases supervision is difficult and there is the risk of fly infection, which may lead to other dangers, but it is a step in the right direction. The ideal is the septic tank, but there are two difficulties : (a) the question of initial expense and (b) the difficulty in getting an adequate water-supply. It has been stated that four to five gallons of water a day are required for each person using the latrine. As regards the question of cost which some gardens might consider prohibitive, Dr. Joly has observed that, in his opinion, the septic tank would decrease the cost of production of tea by saving garden labour. Without putting the figure of diminished efficiency as high as Dr. Ramsay, the Committee have no doubt that the average coolie, suffering from anaemia cannot be expected to do a full day's work, and where such cases are numerous, either the cultivation of the garden must suffer or an additional labour force must be imported. An anaemic coolie is obviously a financial burden to the garden. Prevention is better than cure, and practical efforts to improve sanitation with this object are to be welcomed. The committee do not think that where the labour population lives in scattered hamlets, latrines are either so necessary or indeed practicable, but they have no hesitation in saying that where congested barrack lines, with a large population living under artificial conditions are concerned, the introduction of some system of conservancy is essential. The Empire of India Tea Company in Tezpur, since 1919, have made considerable progress in the erection of latrines, and the medical officer, Dr. Jameson, regards a latrine system as a sound business proposition. Latrines are sometimes attached to hospitals, especially in the Assam valley. No system of conservancy will eradicate hookworm disease, but the committee are satisfied from the medical evidence, that the chance of infection will be appreciably diminished. Most medical witnesses state that coolies are infected with hookworm when they come up from their country. Dr. Jameson is of opinion that hookworm is mostly contracted on the garden. It was suggested to a medical witness that as the question

of the introduction of a conservancy system on tea gardens was in a more or less experimental stage, it might be advisable for medical officers to confer together and discuss the matter, and the committee think that action on these lines might have useful and practical results."

The Government are in general agreement with the Committee's view that while latrines are not necessary or practicable for the labour population living in scattered hamlets, some conservancy system is required for congested barrack lines.

In the oil fields at Digboi there is a good conservancy system with latrines and septic tanks.

The position as regards mines is different and the rule in force there runs as follows:—

"At every mine latrine and urinal accommodation shall be provided on the surface and, if the local Government so directs in the case of any mine or class of mines, in the underground workings of the mine, and, in the case of latrines, the accommodation shall be not less than one seat per 50 employees: provided that the local Government may require that in lieu of latrines or urinals a certain area or areas may be marked off in the surface of the ground for use for this purpose."

In the coal fields the latrine accommodation is adequate, but the septic tank system has not been introduced.

Water-supply, etc.—In most tea gardens no expense is spared to provide a pure water-supply and a pipe system from closed wells or reservoirs has been introduced on many estates.

A piped water-supply exists in all the collieries and in the oil fields at Digboi.

The Assam Oil Company has also paid great attention to drainage at Digboi and put down 12 miles of *pucca* drains in 1928.

27. *Extent and nature of official supervision.*—(i) *Boards of Health.*—There are no such Boards in Assam.

(ii) *Inspection of plantations.*—Tea plantations, which are the only plantations on a large scale in Assam, are regularly inspected by the District and Subdivisional Officers. New gardens and gardens in which conditions are not as satisfactory as they might be are inspected every year. Old established estates where conditions are good are inspected every other year. Unhealthy gardens are also inspected by the Civil Surgeon every year until they obtain a cleaner bill of health. Apart from these regular inspections tea estates are often visited by District and Subdivisional Officers for particular enquiries. With the abolition of indentured labour and the repeal of the provisions of Act VI of 1901, the District Officers as Inspectors of Labour have less legal power than before and any instructions they issue have generally only the force of advice. The management, however, is generally ready to co-operate with the Government officers and to carry out suggestions for such improvement of conditions as are within their power. During these visits the District and Subdivisional Officers pay special attention to the housing, water-supply, and medical facilities provided for the labour force.

The collieries are also inspected as regards these matters by the local officers, the technical inspection of the working of the mines being left to Mines Inspectors.

28. *Suitability of existing factories and mines rules.*—The Factories Rules as a whole are too elaborate for the tea garden factories which, as already pointed out, comprise 549 out of the 591 registered factories in Assam. This is well illustrated in the remarks made by the Chief Inspector of Factories, Bengal and Assam, in his annual report for the year 1927 which are here reproduced:—

"On account of their isolation, seasonal processes and concomitant difficulties tea garden factories have hitherto only received such attention from Inspectors as the circumstances permitted and only those provisions of the Act were applied which by their enforcement would bring most practical good and benefit to the employees. In other words, efforts have been made to apply the Act in both provinces with due consideration and keeping abreast with development in such areas."

"It has been borne in mind that the provisions of the Act and the precision of their enforcement are primarily based on the conditions and circumstances of developed industrial areas such as Calcutta, Howrah and the 24-Parganas and that such mathematical application is impossible with respect to mofussil factories and in particular, tea garden factories.

"With the present establishment of the Jalpaiguri office for the more effective administration of the Act in the tea garden area of Bengal and the possibility in the near future of the establishment of an office in Assam or the reservation of an Inspector for that province, it is an opportune moment to review the limitations of the provisions of the Act when applied to tea garden factories in consideration of the present comparative isolation, indifferent communications and associated difficulties.

" These factories, being seasonal and subjected to weather difficulties, have the benefit in both provinces of exemption from sections 21, 22 and 26 of Chapter IV with certain provisos. As children are not employed in the factory proper, section 23 is more or less of hypothetical application and as the remaining sections of the Chapter are so closely connected with those eliminated by exemptions that enforcement by better arrangements for inspection is similarly hypothetical. In these circumstances the employment register is of little value and inspections whether casual, surprise, or otherwise, necessary for the enforcement of the sections of this chapter, cannot be made with any degree of precision as they are dependent on the conveniences for travel and the weather conditions, monsoon visits in many cases being practically impossible.

" The absence of developed local administration, which as a matter of fact would be futile in such rural and sparsely populated areas, practically precludes the elaborations laid down in the rules regarding sanitary conveniences, and confines the Inspector's work to only superficial efforts in that direction. The administration of the Act in tea garden factories is, therefore practically limited to the enforcement of the main provisions of Chapter III respecting fencing, but nevertheless from the reports of the Inspector of the Jalpaiguri district it is evident that an officer set apart for tea garden factory inspection work is in a position to follow up accidents promptly and do considerable good work in offering useful suggestions regarding fencing, etc.

" The new tea factory pamphlet published by this department during the year, relating in non-technical language the provisions of the Act applicable to such factories, and giving illustrations of typical fencing, and the material to be used, should be of considerable value in the establishment of the fencing provisions of the Act and in overcoming to some extent the disadvantages of remote control by Managing Agents, the lack of facilities for the quick transit of fencing material and the inaccessibility of factories which is a handicap to the Inspector for the purpose of approval of fencing arrangements.

" The new inspection arrangements in Bengal and the expected reorganization in Assam, if worked on the lines indicated and with due consideration to local conditions, should meet the requirements of the general rural development and be a sufficient gesture of force to bring into line possible recalcitrant managers without alienating their sympathies and jeopardising the benefits the workers at present enjoy from the managers' voluntary interest in their welfare".

The mines rules are generally suitable.

29. Industrial diseases are not prevalent in Assam.

30. *Sickness insurance.*—This Government were recently asked by the Government of India to advise on the International Labour Convention and they can only say now what they said in reply to the Government of India in March last. No compulsory sickness insurance scheme would be practicable in Assam at present. The tea and mining industries already provide free for their employees all the benefits that could be obtained by any such scheme and the introduction of any compulsory insurance to which the employees must contribute would be greatly resented by the labour force. The labour employed in these industries is illiterate and excitable. The labourers would not understand the merits of such insurance. They would certainly regard the contribution levied from them as an impost by their employers and their resentment might lead to serious trouble and violence. Outside the tea and mining industries labour in Assam is mostly casual and migratory, and it would be impossible to bring such labour within any scheme of sickness insurance.

The Government of Assam see no chance of success in Assam for any compulsory sickness insurance scheme on a contributory basis, until the spread of education and the general uplift of the labour population have changed the conditions now prevailing.

In view of that opinion the Government do not consider it necessary to examine the details of any such scheme.

31. *Maternity benefits.*—The Government of Assam were consulted by the Government of India in their letters Nos. I.-812, dated the 11th May 1920, and L.-920, dated the 28th May 1921, on the draft convention of the International Labour Conference on the subject of the employment of women before and after childbirth.

This Government agreed with the Government of India that the scheme outlined in the convention was unsuitable for India, and that the introduction of any compulsory benefit scheme was impracticable. Moreover, any such scheme could be applied only to organised industries and in such industries in Assam maternity benefits were already conceded by employers. Pregnancy leave was given usually on half pay and in some cases on full pay, and medical aid was always available, though the women often did not take advantage of it.

In a subsequent review of the benefits conceded this Government submitted the following report to the Government of India in their letter No. 2489R., dated the 14th October 1924 :—

“ Tea estates are the largest employers of labour in this province, and from enquiries made it has been ascertained that voluntary maternity benefit schemes have been adopted by almost every tea estate of repute in this province, and that employers generally recognise that the care and comfort of women before and after childbirth are in the interests of the employer and the employed alike. The systems in force on the several estates differ. Leave is always granted for a period shortly before and after childbirth, varying from three to six months or even longer if this is advised by the medical officer. While pregnant women remain at work they are put on light work on full rates of pay. During the period of leave half pay is usually granted but in some cases full pay is allowed and a bonus at childbirth is often granted in addition. The bonus is in some cases conditional on the child being healthy. Medical treatment is always supplied free of charge and additional comforts are sometimes given. In some tea gardens a crèche system has been established, and the infants are looked after by *ayahs* after their mothers have returned to work. The Assam Railways and Trading Company, which is the next largest employer of labour in Assam, grants six months' leave on half pay provided the women have been examined by the medical officers and attend hospital once a week. Milk and feeding bottles, when required, are also supplied free of cost. By the Assam Oil Company leave is granted on half pay for three months.”

The question soon arose again in connection with a private Bill introduced in the Legislative Assembly. The gist of the Bill was that in factories, mines and tea estates, the work in which was regulated by any law, a woman worker should not be employed for a period of six weeks before and after her confinement and that during her absence from work she should be paid from a maternity benefit fund established and controlled by the Local Government, and financed by contribution to be levied from the factories, mines and tea estates. The opinion of this Government on that Bill given in their letter No. 332, dated the 5th January 1925, was as follows :—

“ With the object of the Bill this Government, as well as all those who have been consulted, are in the fullest sympathy, but whether the measure as drafted is calculated to further these objects is another matter. The position in Assam was explained to the Government of India in Mr. Edwards' letter No. 2346R., dated the 2nd July, 1921, and again in Mr. Soames' letter No. 2489R., dated the 14th October, 1924, and the Governor in Council has nothing to add. His Excellency in Council is satisfied that on the vast majority of tea gardens in this province benefits generally in excess of those provided by the Bill are already enjoyed by female labourers, and he shares the apprehension freely expressed that the enactment of the Bill might result in a reduction of the generous maternity benefits now enjoyed to the minimum which would be prescribed by law. It might equally weaken the good relations which now obtain between employer and employee, as the responsibility of the employer would be limited to payment of the maternity cess.

“ In the opinion of the Governor in Council the most objectionable feature of the Bill is the provision that a central fund should be established and that payments should be made to individual beneficiaries from this. Under present conditions a coolie mother receives her benefit at the place where she is employed. In this province distances are great and communications imperfect, and it would be impossible to establish anything like enough distributing centres to make it possible for beneficiaries to attend and receive their benefits, while it would be necessary to employ an enormous staff.

On the whole the Governor in Council considers that the Bill as drafted is both unnecessary and undesirable as far as this province is concerned. It might be suited to conditions in an industrial centre where large numbers of labourers worked in a factory or a group of factories, but is not suited to the conditions on the tea gardens of this province. If indeed legislation is required the utmost that need be enacted would be the fixing of a minimum benefit, the utmost discretion being allowed to the Local Government to prescribe by rule or executive order the estates to which it should apply and the manner in which it should be enforced. In practice the Bill would then apply only to estates where maternity benefits are not given, and the machinery required to work it would cost little because it would hardly ever be necessary to enforce the law.”

V.—Welfare (other than Health and Housing but including Education).

32 to 35.—Apart from measures for the physical welfare of the labour force, which have already been discussed, there is but little welfare work in Assam. In recent years there has been a movement for the provision of recreation. The Assam

Railways and Trading Company, the Assam Oil Company and many of the tea estates provide football grounds or playing fields for their employees, and cinema and circus entertainments are occasionally provided. The labourers of course have their own forms of amusement. Fishing is a popular form and is available in many tea estates, while in the evening the "tom-tom" with singing and dancing are still the chief attraction. There is of course not much scope for recreation for an illiterate labour force situated in the rural areas of the province, but more might and should be done in the direction of providing some attraction which might successfully compete with the nearest grog or opium shop.

There are no agencies for welfare work other than the employers themselves.

36. Little progress has been made in the direction of the education of the labourers or their children.

In 1908 the Government introduced a scheme to encourage the education of the children of tea garden labourers. Schools were to be divided into three classes, (A) schools maintained and controlled by Government (B) schools owned and controlled by the estate authorities but in return for a grant-in-aid subject to inspection by officers of the Education Department who would hold examinations, on the result of which the amount of the grant-in-aid would depend, and (C) schools owned and controlled by the estate authorities, receiving no grant-in-aid, and open only to informal visits from the district or subdivisional officer.

In 1910 it was estimated that there would be 46 (A) class, 85 (B) class and 230 (C) class schools but that the opening of these schools would be spread over a period of years. Later, it was decided to abolish the proportion of schools between the three classes. In 1916-17 there were 13 A class, with a total enrolment of 361; 40 B class with an enrolment of 1,094 and 96 C class with an enrolment of 1,172. The numbers have steadily declined until in 1926-27 there were only 9 A class, 23 B class and 33 C class, the total enrolment of all three kinds of schools being only 1,798. Apart from the tea garden schools, the Assam Oil Company maintains a Middle English school and the Assam Railways and Trading Company a Middle English and a Primary school for their employees. In no industry is any school maintained for adult labourers. The results can only be described as disappointing. The ordinary public schools are of course open to the children of the labour force employed, but it is unlikely that any large number of the children is sent to such schools. The reasons for the failure of the special schools are not far to seek. The labour force is generally either apathetic or actually hostile to the scheme. They do not appreciate the ultimate advantages which their children would derive, but they do appreciate the more immediate result, viz., the reduction of the wage-earning capacity of their children. Most of the children of school-going age supplement the family earnings and the loss of this additional income, necessitating perhaps a little more work on their own part, condemns the scheme in the eyes of a large majority. The managers, with a few exceptions, do not actively interest themselves in the question, more from the fear of upsetting their labour force than from any antagonism to the principle of the scheme. This policy may be short sighted, but so long as labour is so scarce, it would be too much to expect employers to risk the loss of labour by any attempt to insist on the education of the children, and little improvement can be expected until the supply of labour increases. The Government of Assam however recognize that education is essential for the general uplift of the condition of the labouring classes and if, as they hope, compulsory primary education is actually introduced in the province generally in the near future, it will be possible to apply it to the children of parents employed in industrial undertakings.

38. *Co-operation.*—So far as the Government are aware, co-operative societies do not exist among the industrial labour forces in Assam. They would have little chance of success among the heterogeneous, ignorant and primitive peoples employed on the tea estates of Assam. During the enquiry of the committee in 1921-22, a suggestion was mooted that employers might organize co-operative stores for the benefit of the labour force, but the Government are not aware whether that suggestion has borne fruit. A society of that kind was tried on an estate but failed and such stores have not been a success elsewhere in Assam.

VII.—Safety.

43. *Regulations in Factories and Mines.*—Provision for the safety of workers are contained in Sections 15 to 20 of the Indian Factories Act, and in Rules 8 to 20 of Part III of the rules issued under the Act by this Government.

Similar provisions as regards mines are contained in Sections 18 to 19 of the Act, and in the detailed regulations issued by the Government of India prescribing the qualifications of mine officials and others and regulating the raising and lowering of

persons or materials, haulage, the storage of explosives, ventilation and lighting, roads and working places, protection against fire and the provision of shafts and outlets, and fences and gates. As these regulations are of all-India application and are framed by the Government of India, copies are not appended to this memorandum. These regulations are supplemented by rules issued by the Government of Assam regulating provision for ambulances and first-aid (Rules 6 to 8), the safety of the surface (Rules 12 to 17), and the abandonment of mines (Rules 18 to 21).

44. *Incidence of Accidents in Factories and Mines.*—The figures for 1928 in the case of factories are not yet available. The average daily number of employees in registered factories was 48,119 in 1926 and 48,694 in 1927. The number of fatal accidents in these two years was 7 and 5 respectively, or 14 and 10 per mille. The number of serious accidents reported was 28 in 1926 and 34 in 1927, while 24 minor accidents were reported in 1926 and 28 in 1927. The very low proportion of minor accidents was noticed by the Government of India in their letter No. L.1214, dated the 19th October, 1927, and they drew the conclusion that such accidents were not regularly reported. On this and other grounds the Government of India considered that an improvement in inspection was required a matter which will be mentioned again later. This Government does not dispute the correctness of the inference drawn by the Government of India that minor accidents have not been regularly reported.

The latest figures from mines show 9 fatal and 72 serious accidents in 1927, and 10 fatal and 63 serious in 1928. The number of persons killed and seriously injured was 11 and 73 respectively, in 1927, and 10 and 65 in 1928. One death in 1928 did not occur in a mine, but occurred on the surface, and was due to the fall of a tree. The incidence of deaths from accidents was 3.8 per mille in 1927 and 3.3 in 1928, while the incidence of serious accidents was 25.6 per mille in 1927 and 21.5 in 1928. The incidence has been calculated on the average daily working strength employed underground and in open workings, but excluding the surface workers. In the Chief Inspector's report for 1927 the death rate recorded was 4.22 per mille underground and 2.80 in open workings, while the death rate for the total labour force was 2.73 per mille. In the same year the proportion of serious accidents was 22.01 per mille underground, nil in open workings, and 18.77 on the surface, the proportion for the total labour force being 17.15 per mille.

45. *Cause.*—In discussing accidents in his annual report for 1927 the Chief Inspector of Factories said "the majority of these accidents occurred in tea factories, mainly in connection with transmission machinery, belts, pulleys and shafting, generally caused by the operator's loose clothing getting caught in the belts or shafting during belt manipulation or oiling operations. Where possible recommendations were made by the Inspector to shroud dangerous shafts with covers and to provide persons engaged in oiling operations with tight clothing."

Later in his report the Chief Inspector in discussing the accidents in factories both in Bengal and Assam said "Enquiries disclosed that the majority of these accidents could not have been prevented by any fencing devices, that there was little neglect on the part of managers in taking reasonable or prescribed precautions to ensure safety, and that either the deceased persons themselves or their fellow-workers were, in most cases, responsible for not taking proper precautions, or that the deceased or injured were victims of circumstances which could not be foreseen."

In the mines the accidents were nearly all due to falls of the roof or sides of a mine due to the treacherous nature of the soil.

46. *Accident Prevention.*—Apart from the framing of rules and the inspection of premises to see that the rules are carried out, it is not possible for Government to do much to eliminate or reduce the possibility of accidents. It is impossible to legislate against carelessness of the operatives. It must be left to the management of a factory or mine to warn and advise their employees. This was clearly recognized by the Eleventh Session of the International Labour Conference, which prefaced resolutions on the subject of accident prevention with the following remarks: "Whereas the results obtained by legal regulation and State inspection in the industrial countries with the longest experience of accident prevention show that, while these methods are capable of being and should be improved and developed, they are insufficient by themselves to prevent a large number of accidents which are due to such causes as (1) unsafe practices and arrangements, (2) fatigue, (3) want of reasonable care on the part of individual workers, (4) lack of appreciation by new and especially young workers of the dangers to which they are or may be exposed, and failure on the part of the management to arrange for adequate instruction of such workers." The resolutions which the conference then adopted in furtherance of the "safety first" movement were communicated by this Government at the end of last year to the principal employers of labour in factories and mines in Assam. The Government are not aware how far it has been possible to give effect to these

resolutions in Assam, but obviously measures which can be successfully adopted with an educated and enlightened labour force are far more difficult to adopt with the illiterate and often obstinate type of labour employed in the factories and mines of Assam.

47. *Accidents in non-regulated Establishments.*—No record is maintained of such accidents, and the Government are not in a position to furnish any information.

48. The rules issued under the Mines Act will show that in the coal mines in Assam there must be one man trained in ambulance work for every 100 men employed underground, and one or more stretchers and first-aid appliances kept ready for immediate use at a convenient place. There is no corresponding rule in the rules issued under the Factory Act, but, as has already been stated, in the tea estates, which own the vast majority of the factories in Assam, as well as in the coal mines and oilfields medical aid is always available.

49. *Stringency of Inspection and Enforcement of Regulations.*—In Assam 549 out of a total of 591 registered factories are seasonal, i.e., tea factories. This means that a factory inspection staff would be fully occupied for part of the year and have nothing or very little to do during the rest of the year. In view of these conditions the Government have until this year not entertained any special inspecting staff of their own, but, with the concurrence of the Government of Bengal, have utilized the services of the Bengal staff of Inspectors for technical inspections, while for work not requiring technical knowledge district and subdivisional officers have been employed as factory inspectors. It was realized that the expert inspectors of the Bengal staff would not be able to make regular inspections of all the factories, but it was thought that they would be able to give such clear instructions as regards the fencing of machinery and other technical matters that district and subdivisional officers would be able to see that they were carried out. The system has not worked very satisfactorily. Only about half the total number of factories have been inspected in any one year, while in 1927 only 90 visits of inspection were paid by the whole-time inspectors of the Bengal staff. The instructions as regards machinery given by the expert staff have not been clear enough for the district and subdivisional officers to see that they were carried out, and at times the managers of factories have complained that they could not understand the instructions, and that the instructions given at one inspection contradicted those given at another. Moreover, until 1927 no prosecutions had been instituted in Assam, and this fact, as well as the inadequate number of inspections and the small proportion of minor accidents reported, convinced the Government of India that a change of system was required. To this the Government of Assam have agreed, and they are now trying to obtain an expert as Inspector of Factories for Assam. The remarks of the Chief Inspector of Factories which were quoted earlier in this memorandum show that the scope of inspection must be limited in Assam, that within those limits an improvement has already been effected, and that with the new organization it should be possible to ensure an adequate observance of the law in the factories. As an instance of the tightening of control it may be mentioned that four prosecutions were instituted in Assam in 1927, all of which ended in conviction.

Mines—The inspection of mines, so far as the observance of the regulations of the working is concerned, is carried out by the Special Mines Inspectors. Detailed inspections are usually made every six months.

50. *Effect upon safety of hours, health, light and working conditions generally.*—There are no facts on record which enable the Government of Assam to offer any observation on this subject.

VIII.—Workmen's Compensation.

51. (i) In 1927 compensation was paid or deposited for 20 deaths, 5 cases of permanent disablement and 253 cases of temporary disablement. During that year a sum of Rs. 9,942 was paid as compensation within the province and Rs. 3,100 were remitted to other provinces for distribution. Of the sum paid within the province Rs. 7,716 were paid through the Commissioners for Workmen's Compensation and Rs. 2,236 were paid direct by employers. In addition to the amounts paid as compensation a sum of Rs. 5,598 which had been deposited as compensation was refunded as no dependants of the deceased workmen could be traced, and a sum of Rs. 2,350 remained undisbursed at the end of the year.

In 1928 the number of cases dealt with were 11 deaths, 10 cases of permanent disablement and 897 cases of temporary disablement. Rs. 8,985 were paid in compensation within the province and Rs. 883 were remitted to other provinces for distribution. Of the sum paid within the province Rs. 3,103 were paid through the Commissioners and Rs. 5,882 were paid direct by employers. In two cases the total compensation deposited amounted to Rs. 1,513, but in these cases payments were to be made in monthly instalments and only the amount actually paid during

the year, viz. : Rs. 213 has been included in the figures given above. In addition to the amounts paid, a sum of Rs. 835 was refunded to depositors as no dependants of the deceased workmen could be traced, and a sum of Rs. 5,544 remained undisbursed at the end of the year.

(ii) The Government have no information to show how far the compensation paid compares with the extent of possible claims. There is, however, a possibility as the Act now stands that with a labour force largely illiterate and often unaware of its rights, claims may not always be preferred. This Government have suggested an amendment of the Act which will enable the Commissioner for Workmen's Compensation on his own initiative or on the report of an inspector of factories or mines to institute proceedings without waiting for a claim to be preferred.

(iii) So far as the Government are aware the Act has had no appreciable effect on industry in Assam. On this point the provinces with large industrial centres, where the Act must have been far more widely used, are in a better position to advise.

(iv) (v) Facilities exist for the voluntary insurance of employers' liabilities under the Act, but the Government have no information of the extent to which the facilities have been utilized in Assam.

The value of such insurance from the workers' point of view is that it will thereby be possible for the small employer, if and when the Act is extended, to meet his liabilities, provided of course that he avails himself of the facilities for insurance. No scheme for compulsory insurance would be practical.

52-53. *Suitability of the Provisions of the Act and the Desirability of its extension.*—These questions were recently referred to this Government for advice in the Government of India's letter (No. L.1125), dated the 30th November, 1928. This Government examined the questions carefully in the light of the opinions expressed by a large number of persons including employers, and the conclusions at which they arrived were set forth in their letter (No. Immgn.149-3394 G.J.), dated the 30th May, 1929. A copy of that letter is given in Appendix C.

IX.—Hours.

55 to 62. A.—*Factories.*—The Government have no statistics to show the actual or normal hours of work per day or per week or the number of days worked per week. Work in tea factories is seasonal, being altogether suspended in the cold weather, and during the season the work is intermittent, being dependent on the weather. In bad weather there is little plucking and the quantity of leaf to be manufactured is small. In favourable weather there may be a rush of leaf, necessitating a brief spell of heavy manufacturing work in the factory. The exceptional conditions of this industry make it impracticable to apply the provisions of Section 21 of the Act prescribing a rest period, or Section 22 prescribing a weekly holiday, or Section 26 which requires the management to fix and adhere to specified hours of work for each person employed. The Government have therefore exempted tea factories from the provisions of these sections, but the exemption in the case of Sections 21 and 22 is subject to the conditions (a) that the number of workers employed on a particular job is always at least 25 per cent. greater than the number actually required to do the work at any given time, and (b) that no one shall be required to work without a whole day's leave for more than 14 days at a time.

The first condition in effect gives the workers a rest period, without prescribing fixed hours or shifts. The condition is in accordance with a practice which had previously been adopted in such factories and is popular with the labour force. It allows at least one man in every five to be always absent and resting.

In addition to the exemptions granted in the case of all employees in tea factories, conditional exemptions have been given also in the case of certain classes of workers in all factories on account of the essentially intermittent nature of their work. The work of adult male oilers and adult male persons employed solely on maintenance work has been exempted from the provisions of Section 21, which prescribes a rest period, and Sections 27 and 28 which limit the hours of work to be done in any one week or on any one day, provided that the average weekly hours worked by any such person in any one month shall not exceed 66 hours.

The work of adult male boiler attendants, adult male engine drivers and adult male persons employed on despatching and receiving goods has been exempted from the provision of those sections and also of Sections 22 and 26, provided (a) that no person shall be employed for more than 14 consecutive days without a whole day's holiday; and (b) that the average weekly hours worked by any such person in any one month shall not exceed 66.

For the same reason and subject to the same conditions the work of firemen and their adult male attendants employed on kilns in pottery works has been exempted from the provisions of Sections 22, 27 and 28.

The only other exemption granted in this province is the exemption under the provisions of sub-section 3 of Section 30 of the Act of the work done on "urgent repairs" by adult male persons in all factories from the provisions of Sections 21, 22, 27 and 28, subject to the following conditions : (a) notice, stating the names of persons employed and the precise nature of the work shall be sent to the Chief Inspector of Factories within 48 hours of such employment ; (b) no such persons shall be employed for more than 14 consecutive days without a holiday for two days, or in factories situated on and used solely for the purpose of tea plantations from the 1st April to the 30th November, without a holiday for one day ; and (c) the average weekly hours by any such person in any one month shall not exceed 66.

With these modifications of the substantive provisions of the law necessitated by the special conditions of work in tea factories or the special nature of the work of certain classes of employees, the law regulating the hours of employment have, so far as the Government are aware, worked satisfactorily. The isolated position of most of the factories in Assam makes it impossible to exercise any effective supervision of the hours of work, but there is no reason to believe that there is any "sweating" of labour in factories in Assam.

B.—Mines.

63 to 72. The Mines Act requires that no persons, other than persons defined to be holding positions of supervision or management or employed in a confidential capacity, shall be employed in a mine :—(a) on more than six days in any one week ; (b) if he works above ground, for more than 60 hours in any one week ; (c) if he works below ground for more than 55 hours in any one week ; provided that in a case of emergency involving serious risk to the safety of the mine or the persons employed therein the manager may permit persons to be employed in contravention of these conditions on work necessary for the protection of the mine or persons employed therein. With effect from the 7th April, 1930, the following further restrictions on the hours of labour will come into force :—(a) No person shall be employed for more than 12 hours in any consecutive period of 24 hours. (b) No person shall employ or permit to be employed in a mine any person whom he knows or has reason to believe to have already been employed in any other mine during the preceding twelve hours. (c) Work shall not be carried on in any mine for a period exceeding 12 hours in any consecutive period of 24 hours except by a system of shifts so arranged that not more than one shift of persons employed in work of the same kind shall be at work in the mine at the same time.

There is no provision for any exemption from these restrictions on the hours of employment except that relating to persons holding positions of supervision or management or employed in a confidential capacity. The Government of Assam have defined that class of employees to be :—(a) assistant managers, undermanagers or overmen or any person holding position under the manager equivalent to assistant manager, undermanager or overman ; (b) mechanical engineers or engine-wrights or electricians ; (c) surveyors ; (d) clerks, accountants and time-keepers.

The figures quoted in the Chief Inspector's report shows that the actual hours of work in mines in Assam are 50 hours a week for miners and 54 hours for other underground workers and persons employed in open workings and 56 to 57 hours for persons employed on the surface.

The Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur reports that although the mines are supposed to be worked for six days in the week, many of the men actually work for only four and a half days. The 60 hours' restriction has had no effect, because the hours of work have always been shorter.

C.—Railways.

73 to 77. With the exception of the Dibrugarh-Sadiya Railway, the railways running in the province have their headquarters outside the province. The Government of Assam will leave the discussion of questions affecting railway labour to the Local Governments more directly concerned.

D.—Other Establishments.

78 to 80. (a) *Plantations*.—The Government of Assam are not in a position to give the actual hours of work performed on a tea estate in Assam, but they can safely say from their knowledge of conditions of such estates and the class of labour employed that there is no abuse in the matter of the hours of work and that no control in this respect is required. The system in force allows the worker practically to do as little

work as he chooses and if the actual hours of work could be ascertained, it would probably be found that the amount of work or the hours of work on a tea estate were lower than in any industry.

Under the old system there was a fixed quantity of work for which there was a fixed rate of payment, known as the " *hazira*." The *hazira* was not a full day's work and on completing it the labourer could, if he so desired, undertake a second task the payment for which was known as " *ticca*."

This system has in many estates given way to what is known as the unit system. There is no fixed daily task, but a piece rate is fixed and the labourer is free to do as much or as little work as he likes. With this system of piece work there is no reason for long hours. On the contrary it possesses the serious disadvantage that it does nothing to help the lazy or improvident workman against his own weakness. Many of the labour force are content with a low standard of living and are content to do just enough work to enable them to maintain that low standard. They can do enough work for that in a short time and they have no incentive to work longer. On the other hand, the system gives a greater chance to the hard working and provident labourers. There is another very important factor which affects the question of hours of work on a tea estate. On a very large number of estates the labourers are not solely dependent on their wages. On many estates they are given land free or at a nominal rent for cultivation and they are allowed to absent themselves freely from work in order to attend to their cultivation. Generally, then, it may be said that in the conditions of work on tea estates in Assam there is no danger of long hours of work.

- (b) There are no docks in Assam.
- (c) In the oil fields at Digboi the process of drilling on the fields and distillation in the refinery is continuous. The labour employed on these operations, about 25 per cent. of the force, works in three shifts of eight hours each. The remainder of the labour works from 6 a.m. to 10.45 a.m. and from noon to 4 p.m.

One day's holiday is given every eight days.

X.—Special Questions Relating to Women, Young Adults and Children.

81 to 89.—A. *Factories*.—When the tea garden factories were brought under the Factories Act, the Assam and Surma Valley Branches of the Indian Tea Association undertook to advise managers to abolish or to reduce to a minimum the employment of children in the factory. The Government have always understood that children were practically never employed in such factories. In his annual report for 1927 the Chief Inspector of Factories confirms that impression as he says in the body of the report that children are not employed in the factory proper. The figures published in the statements appended to the report, however, are inconsistent with this. The total average daily number of employees in the factories of Assam is shown as 48,694, of which 44,428 were employed in tea garden factories. On the other hand, the total number of children is shown as 11,263. As the total daily number of employees in factories other than tea factories was only 4,266, the number of children shown must include children employed on tea estates. The explanation probably is that in their returns some tea garden managers have included children who were employed in buildings which are not part of the factory for the purpose of the Act. The total number of women employed was shown in the report to be 12,671. It is possible that that figure also includes women employed outside the factory proper on tea estates.

The Government of Assam are unable to give any further detailed information on this subject, but they are confident that in Assam the employment of women and children is in no way abused.

90 and 91.—B. *Mines*.—No children under 13 years of age are allowed by the Act to be employed in a mine or to be present in any part of a mine which is below ground. This rule is strictly observed. Before any one whose age is doubtful is employed, a doctor's certificate that he is not under 13 years is required. On a reference from the Government of India this Government agreed that the employment of women underground could at once be prohibited in the Assam mines. The proportion of women that had been so employed was so small that no serious dislocation of work would result from the immediate stoppage of the employment of women in underground workings. With effect from October, 1928, no women have been so employed in the mines in Assam. A few women are employed on light work in open workings or on the surface. There is no reason to restrict such employment.

92. C. *Other Establishments*.—There is no need for the regulation of the employment of women and children in other establishments. They are largely employed in the tea gardens as the statistics furnished in paragraph 1 show. It must however, be remembered that those figures include non-workers also. The exact number of

working women and children cannot be given. A tea estate provides light work suitable for women and children and there is no reason to suppose that their employment is in any way abused. Regulation is not necessary, nor indeed would it be practicable to enforce any regulation on the numerous estates scattered all over the province.

XI.—Wages.

A very thorough investigation of the conditions of labour and particularly the rates of wages on tea estates in Assam was made by a Committee appointed by the Government in 1921-22. An unfortunate combination of circumstances in the year preceding the enquiry had led to widespread unrest, which culminated in rioting on several gardens and an exodus of a large number of labourers from gardens in the Karimganj sub-division of the Sylhet district. There was on the one hand a serious depression in the tea industry which crippled the resources of all but the wealthy companies, and curtailed the work and in consequence the wages which could be earned. This occurred at a time when the rise in the general cost of living after the war was at its height, with the result that although the managers generally did their best to see that the labourer did not suffer there was inevitable dissatisfaction and unrest. In the same year, unfortunately, the political situation of the country was gravely disturbed by the so-called non-co-operation movement, a movement which was directed to paralyse the administration. The agitators found in the tea garden labour force, which was already unsettled by economic depression, an easy field for their activities, and there can be no doubt that they deliberately set to work to play upon the feelings of the labour force, with the result that serious trouble occurred in many parts of the province.

The Committee was appointed to enquire whether, in view of the great rise in prices which had occurred, the remuneration paid to the labour force on the tea gardens was sufficient to maintain the labourers in health and a reasonable degree of comfort, and to make any recommendations that seemed desirable for improving the conditions of labour. The Committee submitted their report after a very thorough investigation. Conditions have changed considerably since then and no purpose would therefore be served by quoting the wage figures that then prevailed. It will suffice to say that the Committee found that the rise in wages had not kept pace with the rise in the cost of living and that consequently the labourers' standard of living must have been lowered.

Since then with the return of prosperity there has been a steady increase in wages. In the year 1927-28, the last year for which figures are available, the average monthly cash earnings calculated on the average working strength were Rs. 13-2-1 for men, Rs. 11-6-11 for women and Rs. 7-0-6 for children in the Assam Valley, the corresponding figures in the Surma Valley being Rs. 10-4-7, Rs. 8-6-4 and Rs. 5-4-0. In 1920-21 the figures were Rs. 9-8-5, Rs. 8-1 and Rs. 5-0-10, in the Assam Valley and Rs. 7-10-0, Rs. 6-1-7 and Rs. 3-13-7 in the Surma Valley. The difference is greater than these figures indicate, for the 1920-21 figures included diet and subsistence allowances while the figures for 1927-28 represent cash earnings only.

A distinctive feature of work on tea gardens is that the labourer usually brings his family with him, and the wife and sometimes the children are also wage earners. The joint earnings of a family must always be taken into consideration. The average family of a tea garden labourer has been calculated as consisting of one working man, one working woman, about three-tenths of a working child, one non-working child and about two-tenths of an adult non-working dependant. The average earnings of a family so calculated would be Rs 26-10-9 in the Assam Valley and Rs. 20-4-1 in the Surma Valley, whereas the Committee of 1921-22 calculating on the same principle found that the family earnings in 1922 varied from Rs. 17-7-4 to Rs. 21-15-3 in the several sub-divisions of the Assam Valley and from Rs 14-2-10 to Rs. 16-8-9 in the Surma Valley. As already stated the figures for 1922 included, while the figures for 1927-28 exclude, diet and subsistence allowances so that the increase in earnings is not fully shown by these figures.

Another distinctive feature of work on a tea garden which is of importance in comparing the rates of wages with those given in other industries is that the cash earnings far from represent the total earnings of the labourer. In the first place he is given free housing and medical attendance. In the second place on most gardens land is given to the labourer for cultivation, and in some gardens rice is issued at a concession rate. Taking all things into consideration the earnings are adequate to maintain the labourers in a reasonable degree of comfort. Comfort of course varies with the standard of living. As has already been stated, that standard is not high with the illiterate tea garden labourers belonging mostly to aboriginal tribes, and it is an interesting question how far an increase in the wage rates leads to increased earnings or means merely less work done. The system of wage payment, which has been described in an earlier paragraph, practically leaves the labourer free to do as

much or as little as he likes, and when the question of the effect of a rise in wages on the labourer's earnings was considered by the Committee of 1921-22, there was a consensus of opinion among managers then that any appreciable rise in the wage rate would only result in the labourer doing just sufficient work to enable him to earn the same amount as before. The Committee did not accept that view without qualification. They held that if the increase in wage rate was not in excess of the rise in the cost of living, the average labourer would do as much work as before and some might be encouraged to do more, but if the increase in the wage rate is in excess of the increased cost of living, many would probably do less work. With that view the Government of Assam agree. In the Resolution on Immigration Labour for 1926-27 the Governor in Council made the following comments : "Satisfactory as the steady increase in wages in recent years is, it should be accompanied by an improvement in the standard of living if it is to be of real benefit. Not much is gained by an increase in earnings beyond the level of a subsistence wage, if the labourer has no desire for any additional comforts or luxuries save drink. An increase in the standard of living would give a further incentive to work and improve the outturn and efficiency of the labourer. It is however, difficult to instil new ideas where any innovation is regarded with suspicion and often tends to active resentment. Progress in this direction must unfortunately be slow." This point was noticed again in the Resolution of last year when the Governor in Council remarked that what was now needed was a gradual and steady improvement in the standard of living and the amenities of life to accompany the gradual and steady increase in wages.

There is yet another consideration to be borne in mind in estimating the advantages which the tea garden labourer derives. They are agriculturists, and the ambition of most of them is to obtain land for cultivation during the period of employment in the garden and after their retirement. In 1928 the total land cultivated by labourers still in employ was 159,667 acres, of which 130,604 acres were held by them as tenants of the estates and 29,063 acres as settlement holders of land outside the estates. This represents more than a quarter of an acre per adult labourer, or about half an acre for a family, although actually the land is not, of course, evenly distributed among the labour force. The figures quoted in paragraph (2) show to what extent land is taken up after retirement.

Finally it must be remembered that from the point of view of the employer labour costs considerably more than is represented by the wages and other concessions. The labour is imported from long distances, and with the present demand and competition for labour large sums are paid in the form of bonus to the recruiting sardars in addition to the journey expenses and advances given to the recruited labour. It has been estimated that a labourer costs from Rs. 100 to Rs. 150 to import. This adds very greatly to the cost, especially in the case of short-term labour. The cost of importation is excessive, but the industry must be left to solve that problem for itself. A reduction in such charges would enable the industry to increase the wage rates, and, even though this might not result in a proportionate increase of the individual's output for the reasons already given, the higher rates of wages should increase the labour supply, the industry's most pressing need.

Mines.—The rates of wages paid in the mines of Assam are high, and there is no shortage in the labour supply. The rates vary in different mines, and for the different classes of workers. For work underground or in open workings in the collieries of the Lakhimpur district the wages of men vary from 12 As. to Re. 1. 8 As., or even Re. 1. 12 As. a day, and for work above ground from 10 As. to Re. 1. In the Kongon mine, in the Naga Hills district, the rates are rather higher. The wage rate for women, who are no longer employed underground, varies from 8 As. to 10 As. a day. The average rates of wages for all classes of work are approximately Rs. 26 a month for men and Rs. 15 for women. The average wages earned have not varied much in recent years. In 1921 the average wages were Rs. 26.7 for men and Rs. 14.4 for women.

The Chief Inspector of Mines in his report for 1927 noted that the wages paid in Assam compared favourably with those paid in Bengal and Bihar and Orissa.

In the match factory at Dhubri the average wages earned are Rs. 15 a month for unskilled labour and Rs. 25 a month for skilled labour.

In the oilfields at Digboi all men at first are paid at the rate of 12 As. a day, which is raised to 13 As. or 14 As. a day after three months. Ordinary labourers rise to Rs. 1-4 in the fields and Rs. 1-6 in the refinery. They can rise to posts of fitters on Rs. 3-4 a day in the refinery, or in the fields to posts of drivers on Rs. 40 a month or drillers on a scale of Rs. 45 to Rs. 90 a month. The average wages are from Rs. 26 to Rs. 35 a month.

No figures are available to show the rates of wages in other industries, but they are so few and unimportant in Assam that the data would have been of little value.

The average wages of ordinary agricultural male labour in the plains district vary from 8 As. to 12 As. a day, while village carpenters get from Re. 1 to Re. 1—8 and blacksmiths from 12 As. to Re. 1 a day. Ploughmen are usually engaged for the season, when their pay varies from Rs. 9 to Rs. 10 a month *plus* board and lodging. Women earn from 8 As. to 8 As. a day in agricultural labour.

105. *Minimum Wages.*—Minima rates of wages were fixed by statute for indentured labour on tea estates in Assam under Act VI of 1901 and even before that date, but with the abolition of such labour the law is no longer operative. There is at present no minimum wage legislation in force. The Government of Assam agree with the general principle that there should be minimum wage-fixing machinery for trades in which no arrangements exist for the effective regulation of wages by collective agreement or otherwise, and in which wages are exceptionally low, but it should be left to the Government concerned to decide what trades satisfy the criteria and to which of such trades a minimum wage should be applied. Whether or not it is either desirable or practicable to apply a minimum wage to any trade in Assam, the Government are not prepared to say definitely without a detailed enquiry, but at present they are disposed to think that it is not necessary or practicable. The fixation of a minimum wage would be a matter of great difficulty. Regard must ordinarily be had to (a) the cost of a suitable standard of living, (b) the state of the industry, and (c) the general level of wages, and the relative importance of each factor must vary with individual cases. The success of any attempt to modify by legislation conditions which owe their existence to economic causes must necessarily be limited, and even if minimum wage-fixing machinery were set up, it is doubtful if in Assam at any rate it would actually be required. It must be remembered that in Assam the demand exceeds the supply, and where such a condition exists wages generally will be comparatively high.

106. *Deductions.*—The question of the extent to which deductions from wages by fining was practised in Assam, and the necessity of legislation to regulate it was examined by this Government in 1927 on a reference from the Government of India.

It was ascertained on tea estates the system of fining for bad work or damage to materials was very rare. The piece-work system is generally in force, and as the labourer is paid for the actual work done, the question of fining for bad work does not arise. Members of the supervising staff are occasionally fined for neglect of work or irregularities. The power of fining for damage to tools and plant is not utilized at all in tea estates. Fines are imposed for breaches of discipline such as drunkenness, but the power is not abused. Any abuse of fining would at once lead to an exodus of the labourers, and this in itself is a sufficient safeguard. An instance of this occurred this year. A manager imposed some fines for bad work and for letting cattle trespass. A large body of the workmen struck work and leaving the garden proceeded to the district headquarters to ventilate their grievances. They returned to work on the manager undertaking to refund the fines. In industries other than the tea industry the system of fining for bad work and damage to materials as well as for breaches of discipline does exist, but there is no reason to believe that it is abused. In the Assam Railways and Trading Company which is the largest of such industries in the province, the total fines imposed in one year amounted only to 18 per cent. of the wages bill. The Government of Assam are of opinion that the power of fining must be retained as an alternative to other and less desirable means of maintaining discipline and to the more drastic punishment of dismissal for bad work. There is no abuse of the power in Assam, and there is no danger of abuse in a province where labour is difficult to obtain and perhaps even harder to retain, and any abuse of the power would bring its own punishment in the loss of labour. For these reasons legislation to regulate fining is not required in Assam.

107. *Periods of wage payments.*—A Bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly in September, 1924, which provided for the payment of wages weekly to all employees in factories to which the Factories Act applied, to all employees in Government and private service and to all workers and employees wheresoever employed whose wages amounted to less than Rs. 100 a month.

(i) This Government then made an exhaustive enquiry as to the practice in this province both as regards the period for which wages were paid and the period elapsing before payment and also as to the necessity of legislation. It was found that the period for which wages were paid varied in different industries and in the same industry in different localities. In the tea industry weekly payments were the custom in the Surma Valley while in the Assam Valley monthly payments were made for the regular "haviras" and payment for *nicka* was made at weekly or even shorter periods. With the extension of the unit system of calculating wages, i.e., the extension of the piece work system, weekly payments have since become more usual in the Assam Valley also. In coal mines payments were made either weekly, fortnightly or monthly. In small rice and other mills monthly payments were the rule and

also in engineering works. All Government employees were and are paid monthly. The proposal to enforce by legislation a uniform system of weekly payments met with strong opposition in Assam. The system in force in the several industries was the one that had found most favour. There was no need of a change and no demand for a change among the employees. As regards tea estates it may safely be said that if the labourers want their wages paid at more frequent intervals, they will get them, but serious results would be likely to result if an attempt was made to introduce a change in system which the labourers did not want. A Railway Company reported that the weekly payment system had been introduced, but at the request of the employees they had reverted to the monthly system. Government employees were opposed to any change from the monthly system, and there was also strong opposition to any change in the case of private servants. There are arguments for and against a weekly payment system. The member who introduced the Bill argued that the monthly system means that low paid employees had to live on credit, whereas there are many who hold and with justification that the monthly system encourages thrift. Employees find it more easy to make remittances home when their wages are paid monthly and too often the weekly payment means that more money is dissipated in drink and that men who had that failing would be incapable and absent from work for four days instead of one day in the month. Advances too are freely made in the industries in Assam and this custom meets the objection that the monthly system compels the workman to live on credit. There has been no change in this respect since 1924-25, and the Government are convinced that uniformity in the period of wage payments is unnecessary and that any attempt to enforce by legislation any particular period is not only unnecessary but would be greatly resented.

(ii) The question of the period elapsing before payment stands on a different footing. The enquiry made in 1924-25 showed that here too the practice varied. When wages were paid weekly or fortnightly they were usually paid within three to six days after they had been earned. In the case of monthly payments the interval varied from five to fifteen days. There was no evidence of any hardship in Assam, uniformity of the interval between the pay days being more important than the interval between the date of payment and the date in which wages had been earned. Still, even though no hardship had resulted in Assam, there is no justification for any long interval between the date on which the wages accrue and the date of actual payment. The Government of India in their letter No. L.-1391, dated the 28th July, 1926, consulted Local Governments on the desirability of legislation to prescribe short intervals and they suggested that if legislation were undertaken, the maximum interval allowed might be seven days in the case of monthly payments, four days in the case of fortnightly payments, two days for weekly payments and one day for daily payments. The difficulty of enforcing any such Act if it was left to the workmen to invoke the aid of the law was recognized by the Government of India. The inconvenience of going to law to secure a small advantage and the possibility of reprisals by the employer would generally deter a workman from taking action under the law. The Government of India therefore suggested that if legislation were considered desirable, it should be confined in its operation to establishments which are subject to the operation of the Factories Act or Mines Act, as the inspecting staff for such establishments could enforce the Act. The view which this Government expressed in reply to the Government of India's reference and to which they still adhere is that, although there is no real need at present for such legislation in Assam, they accept the general principles which the Government of India had put forward and agree that legislation on those lines and subject to the restrictions proposed could be given effect to in Assam without any serious difficulty.

(iv) *Treatment of unclaimed wages.*—This question has not come up for consideration in Assam.

108. *Indebtedness.*—The Government have no statistics to show to what extent the labourers of this province are indebted. In the tea estates and other industries where advances are given there must always be some indebtedness to the employer. The system, however, is popular with the labour force and such advances are rarely if ever recovered except in easy instalments. Before the abolition of Act XIII of 1859 an outstanding advance, whatever its nature, was no doubt used as an argument against the grant of a discharge certificate, and to that extent the indebtedness of the labourer may be said to have affected his freedom. Now, however, there is nothing to prevent a labourer from leaving his work whether he is in debt or not, and the employer would have no remedy but a civil suit, which would never be brought.

There was one system of advances to which the Labour Enquiry Committee of 1921-22 took exception and that was the system of issuing rice at concession rates on credit. They remarked that one result of this system and of realizing the cost of the rice at the end of the month was that the labourer not infrequently finds himself with little or nothing in hand for the purchase of other necessaries. Moreover rice

advances, they found, where sometimes kept outstanding over a series of years, deductions being made from time to time to reduce the debt, when the labourers earnings permitted deductions. This system was bound, they considered, to create discontent and misunderstanding. Moreover, when rice is issued on credit there is perhaps a tendency for a labourer to take more than he actually requires. If cash payment had to be made at the time of issue, the labourer might be more careful and the necessity of doing more work to pay for other necessaries might be more obvious to him. The Committee therefore advocated that when rice was issued it should be issued only for cash payments.

To what extent the Committee's recommendations have been accepted, the Government are unable to say.

Of the indebtedness of labourers of tea estates or other industries to persons other than their employers, the Government have no reliable information.

109. *Bonus and profit sharing schemes.*—No such system is in force in the industries of Assam. With the labour force of the type employed on the tea estates and in other large industries, there are two main objections to any such scheme. In the first place the labourers would fail to understand why no bonus or a reduced bonus was given in bad years. Secondly, the bonus would generally be wasted. The Bombay Industrial Disputes Committee in their report, which was issued shortly before the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1921-22, submitted their report, stated that it is an almost universal experience that a bonus has no permanent effect on the standard of living and that it is immediately dissipated in increased absenteeism or else in the grog shop. The Assam Labour Enquiry Committee in agreeing with that view pronounced against the bonus system and stated that in their opinion the first essential of Indian labour is a higher standard of living and any spare money which employers have would be better spent on education, superannuation benefits and welfare work generally. With the views then expressed the Government of Assam are in complete agreement.

110. *Annual leave.*—There is no regular system of leave in force in the industries of Assam which employ mainly imported labour. Long leave to enable the labourers to go to their homes at short intervals would not be a practicable proposition.

Actually the system of recruiting through garden sardars does enable many labourers to visit their homes at not infrequent intervals. Labourers are often recruited for short terms and many return to Assam for another period after a visit to their homes.

XIII.—Industrial Efficiency of Workers.

112 to 116. The Government of Assam are not in a position to offer any comment on these subjects.

XIV.—Trade Combinations.

117-122. The only trade organization that exists in this province is the organization of those employers in the tea industry, a very large proportion, who belong to the Assam and Surma valley branches of the Indian Tea Association. That undoubtedly is a very strong organization. What effect that organization has on the industry or on the conditions of workers is difficult to say. As regards the industry the effect must be presumed to be beneficial. Union is strength and in so far as the Association has been able to formulate and adopt a common policy, that must generally be for the good. At times such policy is resented by individual managers or employers and it may at times be mistaken or short-sighted, but the success which the industry has achieved must be accepted as a proof that at any rate, from the point of view of the employer or the shareholder, the policy has on the whole been remarkably successful. It does not follow of course that success from that point of view means also the prosperity of the labour force. The fettering of an individual manager's discretion by the control exercised by the Association may act as a check on progress in the matter of the improvement of labour conditions. The shortage of labour is the industry's chief trouble and in these circumstances the Association cannot but realize that the contentment of the labour force is essential to the industry, but it takes longer to convince an Association than an individual, and an Association has to think of the circumstances of the less fortunately placed of its members, so that in any matter involving considerable outlay without an immediate return, the Association would take longer to move than an individual employer of a prosperous estate with nothing to think about except his own estate. This tendency must be more marked when, as in the case with the tea industry, control of the Association is largely exercised from Calcutta by men who have not the local knowledge that the managers of the estates possess. It must be admitted that the Association has not always moved forward in the matter of improving labour

conditions as quickly as it might have done. On the other hand it is easier to deal with an Association than with a host of individual employers, and Government have therefore been able to explain their views and advocate measures more effectively by addressing the Association than if there had been no controlling body. Government have not hesitated to bring to the notice of the Association any matter which seemed to them to call for improvement or redress, and it is only fair to say that the Association has generally been ready to go as far as possible to meet the wishes of the Government.

Outside the Indian Tea Association, there is no organization of employers or labour in Assam. There is no Trade Union in Assam. It would however be a mistake to suppose that labour has therefore been incapable of any concerted action. On the contrary a combination of labour on a tea estate to ventilate a grievance, real or imaginary, and demand redress is of frequent occurrence. The labour force is excitable and obstinate. Once they get an idea into their heads it is very difficult to remove it. Anyone with a grievance soon finds a host of champions and unless the manager can satisfy them that the grievance is imaginary or that, if genuine, substantial justice will be done, their resentment is as likely as not to find expression in violence or in an exodus from the garden.

XV.—Industrial Disputes.

123. Strikes of a kind have been of frequent occurrence in the tea industry, and in fact are inevitable in the conditions of the industry. With an ignorant labour force, drawn mainly from aboriginal tribes, easily excited and rarely stopping to think, controlled by one or two Europeans and a small subordinate staff, situated in out of the way localities and at a distance from any assistance, the wonder has always been, not that outbreaks occur, but that they do not occur more often. The causes of such conflicts have already been described. Resentment at some grievance sometimes real and sometimes imaginary, such as the infliction of a punishment, a change in procedure introduced by a new manager and variations in the task, has been the usual cause. In the outbreaks of 1920-21, which have already been mentioned, economic causes were more prominent. Such outbreaks have always been short lived. The intervention of the police and the district or sub-divisional officer was often required, but they were always able to settle the dispute and restore peace and order. In such occurrences the principle of suspending work until a demand has been satisfied has played but a small part, the labourers usually venting their sense of grievance at once in an outbreak of violence and then resuming work.

Another form of strike, if it can be so called, which has become common in recent years is the exodus of a body of labourers who discover that Assam or the conditions of a tea estate are not to their liking. This has been due to the importation of labourers from areas which have not supplied labour for Assam before. Many such cases occurred when new areas were opened for recruitment in Madras, and again quite recently when recruitment was opened in the Bombay Presidency. Occasionally complaints were made that the wages were not what the men had been led to expect, but usually the sole cause was dislike of the Assam climate and of the work. The men and women found themselves in surroundings quite different from those of their own homes, and home sickness proving too much for them, they left their employ in a body, prepared if necessary, to walk to their homes. These events were not strikes to enforce any demand. The labourers were not asking for any better terms as an inducement to stay. They were merely determined to go back to their homes and were not prepared on any terms to stay in Assam. These occurrences could to some extent have been prevented by more judicious recruitment. When new areas are opened to recruitment, it is essential firstly that the type of man recruited should *prima facie* be suited to the work which he will be required to perform, and secondly that only a few such persons should be recruited in the first instance to any one garden. If and when they are found suitable and take kindly to their new life, then they can bring up more of their kith and kin. The mistake too often made was to import a large number in the first instance including men who were clearly not likely ever to adapt themselves to the life on a tea estate.

Strikes in the ordinary sense, i.e., stoppage of work as a means to induce employers to grant better terms are of recent date on tea estates. They came into prominence in 1926-27. A strike occurred in one estate in that year which was settled by the grant of some concessions. Exaggerated rumours of the concessions which had been obtained led to a series of strikes in the Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts chiefly. They were all very short lived. In no case was there any serious grievance or any evidence of ill-will between the men and their employers, and on the grant of a few minor concessions in some cases and the promise of an enquiry in others the men contentedly returned to work in a day or two. Since that year there have been a few strikes of this nature which have also been quickly settled, but it is

probable that the strike as a weapon to enforce demands reasonable or otherwise will be more readily resorted to on tea estates in the future. There has never been any lock-out of employees on tea estates.

In other industries in Assam strikes have been rare—(1) in 1921 there was a prolonged strike on the Assam-Bengal railway. In its origin it had no connection with any economic cause. It originated at Chandpur as a strike in sympathy for the tea garden labourers who had migrated to Chandpur from gardens in the Surma valley. The strike was an attempt to compel the Bengal Government to repatriate the labourers. The strike was closely associated with the non co-operation movement of that year and was kept alive partly by the political agitation and partly in the hope of securing reinstatement without loss of pay and service. This strike will probably be discussed in the memorandum of the Government of Bengal.

(2) In July, 1920, the drivers, boiler makers, workshop staff and many of the traffic department of the Dibrugarh-Sadiya railway struck work for a 50 per cent. increase in wages. The strike was settled ten days later by the grant of an increase of 35 per cent. for employees drawing less than Rs. 30 a month and of 30 per cent. for those drawing more than Rs. 30 but less than Rs. 100.

(3) In 1928 a strike of platelayers and mists occurred on the Dibrugarh-Sadiya railway. Thirty men of one section struck for higher wages. At different dates they were joined by others until about 430 men were on strike. The strike lasted for 17 days and ended in the grant of an addition of Rs. 2 in the monthly wage rate.

(4) In November, 1928, a strike occurred at the match factory at Dhubri. The strike originated with employees in the box filling department who demanded an increase in wages. There had been a reduction some months previously in the piece work rates of that department. The old rates had been fixed when the factory was first established and all the workmen were untrained. With the installation of more machinery and the training of the employees the work had become easier and the old rates gave the employees disproportionately high wages compared with men in other departments. The rates were revised but even with the lower rates the employees were earning higher wages than they had a year before, the average being from Rs. 45 to Rs. 60 a month. In spite of this the employees in this department decided to strike and they induced almost the whole staff in other departments to join them. The management however remained firm. On the fourth day the men began to resume work and by the end of the week all resumed work unconditionally except about fifteen irreconcilables who were discharged.

(5) In 1929 about 800 men, comprising drillers, drivers and ringmen of the Digboi oilfields, struck against work on Sundays. Under the arrangement in force a holiday was given to batches of men every eighth day. A general holiday on Sunday was not given to avoid a complete suspension of work. Sunday, however, is the local market day and the strikers demanded that there should be a general holiday on that day. To enforce their demand they suspended work on Sunday, the 2nd June, resuming work again the next day. They announced their intention of striking each Sunday, but the matter was settled before the following Sunday by the promise of a bonus varying from Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 for each man who worked on a Sunday in addition to the three preceding days and was prepared to work for the three following days.

124 to 126. Hitherto in the tea industry both employees and employers have looked to the District or Subdivisional Officer for the settlement of any dispute, and hitherto the intervention of the local officers has always been sufficient. Owing to the nature of the labour force and the isolation of the tea estates, prompt intervention is enjoined on the local officers by Government in the interests of peace and order, but the duties imposed on the local officers do not stop at the suppression of any disorder. They are required always to investigate the causes of the trouble and the grievances put forward by the labourers, and if any substantial grievance is disclosed, the District or Subdivisional Officer endeavours and generally succeeds in securing its redress. Reports of all such cases are submitted to the Government and, if the management is unwilling or unable of its own initiative to carry out the recommendations of the local officers, the Government address the Managing Agents of the estate or the branch of the Indian Tea Association concerned. Conditions, however, are changing in Assam as elsewhere, and the time may not be far off when it may be necessary to call into being the machinery created by the Trades Disputes Act. Widespread strikes throughout the tea estates would be a public calamity not only in the inevitable distress of the labour force and the great loss to the industry which any prolonged stoppage would cause, a loss which would affect tea consumers throughout the world, but also in the serious disorder that would probably ensue. Any machinery which would be serviceable in such an emergency is to be welcomed, not only by employers and employees, but also by the Government and the general public.

XVI.—Law of Master and Servant.

127 to 132. The Government do not desire to offer any remarks on this subject except to say that the repeal of the Workman's Breach of Contract Act has had no ill effects on the tea industry, but it is impossible to say to what extent the abolition of the Act has effected an improvement in the industry.

The working of the Act was dealt with at length in the report of the Committee of 1921-22 and in the Resolution thereon published by Government. The abolition of the penal provision for breach of contract in itself has of course improved the position of the labourer, but to what extent that has given a stimulus to recruitment or led to the increase in wages it is not possible to say. Although it had been worked generally with fairness, the Act might be and was occasionally abused, and the removal of the possibility of abuse must be to the interest of the employer as well as the labourer.

XVII.—Administration.

133. *Provincial Legislature.*—The Legislative Council has not concerned itself much with labour questions. This may be due to the fact that labour is not properly represented in the Council. One seat is reserved for nomination of a member to represent labour but it has been impracticable to find anyone who could adequately represent it. Among the labouring classes of Assam there was no one of sufficient education and ability to be selected as their representative, and even outside the labouring classes it was difficult to find anyone who possessed a close acquaintance with their condition and needs and had identified himself with their interests. The difficulty is illustrated by the fact that for most of the period since the Reforms the member nominated to represent labour was himself an employer. Although he was one who had always shown himself keenly interested in the welfare of his labour force, the nomination of an employer was admittedly an anomaly. During the last session of the Council, an Indian missionary, who worked among the classes to which the labour population belongs, was nominated to represent labour. In their recommendations to the Statutory Commission the Government of Assam, recognizing that the present position is unsatisfactory, have suggested a scheme by which labour could be directly represented by election.

As matters now stand it is not surprising that labour questions have not figured prominently in the proceedings of the Legislative Council. In 1924 a resolution was carried demanding that the maintenance of schools by tea garden proprietors should be made compulsory. This was opposed by Government as singling out a particular industry for application of the principle of compulsion which had not then been accepted by the Council for general application. The planting representatives in the Council also urged that compulsion would have a seriously disturbing effect on labour. Questions have at times been asked on the subject of conflicts between the management and the labour force which had figured in the newspapers, but otherwise the Council proceedings have not given any indication of special interest in the industrial labour population as distinct from the general rural population of the province.

Outside the Council individual members have from time to time interested themselves in the welfare of labourers, principally on occasions of an exodus of a body of imported labourers from some tea estate, when the questions of their maintenance and repatriation to their country have been taken up by individual members of the Council.

134. *International Labour Organization.*—This is a matter which the Government of Assam will leave to the Central Government.

135. *Relations between Central and Local Governments.*—Inter-provincial migration is a central subject and accordingly questions concerning the recruitment of labour from other provinces and its importation to Assam are directly controlled by the Central Government and legislation on these subjects is undertaken in the Central Legislature.

Mineral development is also a central subject and the Central Government therefore directly controls mines and the conditions of labour therein.

Industrial matters included under the following heads:—(a) factories, (b) settlement of labour disputes, (c) electricity, (d) boilers, (e) gas, (f) smoke nuisances and (g) welfare of labour are classed as provincial subjects under item 26 of Part II of Schedule I of the Devolution Rules, but subject in the case of heads (a), (b), (c), (d) and (g) to legislation by the Indian legislature. The central legislature is therefore given power of legislation in these subjects, and in virtue of the provisions of section 80A of the Government of India Act, no legislation on these subjects can be undertaken in a provincial legislature without the previous sanction of the Governor General. The final executive control vests also in the Governor General in Council under section 45 of the Government of India Act. This control is unrestricted as these subjects are reserved subjects and do not therefore come under section 45A (3) of the Act and Rule 49 of the Devolution Rules framed thereunder.

The powers vested in the Central Government have been freely exercised, but not hitherto to the prejudice of the Local Government. There is of course always the possibility that legislation might be introduced in the central legislature which would not be suitable to a particular province, but on the other hand the power of control is a check on hasty or predatory legislation in a provincial Legislative Council. In their recommendations to the Statutory Commission the Government of Assam have advocated the retention of the control, both legislative and executive, which now vests in the Central Government.

136. *Administrative Authorities in Various Governments.*—There are no special labour officers employed under the Assam Government.

137. *Effect of Difference in Law or Administration in Indian States and British India.*—This question does not concern Assam. Manipur is the only Indian State with which this province is directly concerned apart from the small Khasi States. In Manipur there is no large industry and no industrial labour problems arise. The Khasi States are only semi-independent and the terms of the *Sanads* given to the Siems or Chiefs bring them under the close control of the Assam Government and their officers. Should the necessity arise in future, it should be possible to bring conditions in the Khasi States into conformity with those prevailing in British India at any rate in all important matters.

138. *Acquaintance of Work People with Factory Legislation.*—It can safely be said that the tea garden labour force which comprises most of the labouring classes in Assam know little of and perhaps care less for the factory legislation that has been introduced. The reasons for this have already been given.

139 to 142. The nature of the work of inspection done in factories, mines and plantations has been discussed in earlier paragraphs where it was explained that such work was necessarily limited in scope by the conditions prevailing in Assam.

XVIII.—Intelligence.

143. As regards tea estates the Government obtain from the managers vital statistics and statistics showing the number of men, women and children resident in the estate, recruitment and wages.

For mines statistics showing the number of employees and accidents are furnished in the annual returns. The Deputy Commissioners also inspect the registers of vital statistics. For factories only figures showing the number of employees and hours of work are supplied.

These statistics may be accepted as accurate.

No statistics are furnished by other concerns, but they can be and are obtained when required. For instance the figures furnished in the memoranda as regards the oilfields at Digboi and the Assam match factory have been supplied to the Deputy Commissioners concerned by the managers.

There is also a triennial census of agricultural wages. The decennial census also furnishes details of the cost of living and wages.

144. For the purpose of the requirements of this province no more elaborate statistics are required.

145. There was an enquiry into the conditions on tea estates in 1906, and a more recent one, which has been referred to in the memoranda, in the year 1921-22. There have been no other special investigations in this province.

APPENDIX A.

No. Immgn. 215—5705 G.J., dated Shillong, the 1st September, 1927.

From G. E. SOAMES, ESQ., C.I.E., I.C.S., Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam.

To the SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, Department of Industries and Labour.

Subject.—Revision of the Assam Labour and Emigration Act, VI of 1901.

I am directed to refer to Mr. Clow's letter No. L.1266, dated the 23rd December, 1926, in which the views of this Government have been asked on the subject of recruitment for the labour districts in Assam.

2. The first question which the Government of India have asked is whether it is necessary now to maintain any form of control over recruitment. The Governor in Council fully agrees that the policy of Government should be directed towards the removal of all restrictions on the free movement of labour, and he strongly sympathises

with the view that the tea industry in Assam should no longer be placed under special disabilities in the matter of recruitment as compared with the industry or other industries in other parts of India. Free and untrammelled recruitment is admittedly the ideal towards which all efforts should be directed. The Governor in Council is anxious to do all in his power to assist the industry in Assam towards the realization of that ideal, and he agrees that at any rate some relaxation of the existing rigid restrictions should at once be conceded. He is not, however, prepared to admit that the time has already come when all control can be removed. The Government of India on this point have asked for the opinion only of the local Governments of the provinces from which labour is recruited for Assam and thereby seem to suggest that it is only those governments who are concerned in this aspect of the question. To this view the Governor in Council must demur. The local governments of the recruiting districts may be primarily concerned in this matter, but the matter is one in which this Government also are vitally interested. It would be in Assam that any trouble would arise from irregular recruitment or the recruitment of unsuitable persons. In the event of such trouble it would be for this Government to intervene to keep the peace and to take such other action as the situation required. They are also interested in seeing that nothing should occur which would endanger the industry on which the prosperity of the province so greatly depends. The Governor in Council is confirmed in his view that the time has not yet come for the removal of all control by the opinion not only of all officers in Assam, who are in close contact with the conditions of the industry, but also of the Indian Tea Association with whose representatives he has thoroughly discussed the question. Under the present system most of the abuses of the past have been suppressed, cases of irregular or fraudulent recruitment are comparatively rare, and the majority of the employers and their agents set their faces sternly against any unauthorised or improper methods. There are, however, some concerns which are not members of the India Tea Association and do not recruit through any recognised agency, and these must always be a potential source of trouble and open the door, even if a small one, to the recrudescence of the evils of the past. Moreover, the competition for labour is so keen that, with the removal of all control, the **arkati* will again find a lucrative business in recruiting for the industry and some control will undoubtedly be required to keep in check what the Indian Tea Association has described as "the admitted tendency for professional recruiters to resort to unscrupulous methods."

The Government of India suggest that emigrants are now more sophisticated, the journey from their homes is shorter, and greater interest is taken in their welfare by the press and the legislatures, and they suggest that in these altered conditions it might be possible to dispense with control altogether. The opinions of all who have practical knowledge of present-day conditions are emphatically opposed to this view. The emigrant is still credulous, he will be easily deluded by specious stories of work and wages which he may expect on an Assam tea garden, and although it is true that he is now free to leave his employ whenever he likes, that will not save him from being stranded in a strange province with no means to get back to his own country. The journey to his own country may have been shortened but only if he has the money to avail himself of the quicker means of transport now available. This he will not have unless he stays in his employ long enough to earn it. The unwilling labourer, it is true, is a bad investment for an employer, but the professional recruiter will be scrupulous neither of the employer's nor of the emigrant's interests. He will care only for his own immediate gain, and it must be remembered that even the unwilling labourer may be compelled for the reasons given above to remain for some years in Assam. The Governor in Council is confident that employers in Assam, with a few possible exceptions, will in no way encourage malpractices. On the contrary, as has already been stated, they are directly opposed to them, but with the removal of all control, they as well as the emigrants will be victimised by the unscrupulous recruiting agent, whether he be a garden sardar or a professional recruiter, and it is in the interests of employer and labourer alike that the retention of some form of control over recruiting is still required.

3. While holding the opinion that the time for the removal of all control has not yet come, the Governor in Council agrees strongly with the view that some relaxation of the existing restriction should at once be granted. The prohibition of all recruitment except recruitment by garden sardars is now not merely unnecessary but actually harmful to the industry. As the Government of India have pointed out, sardari recruitment cannot be used by a new employer or in a new area of recruitment. The sardar with good connections is admittedly the industry's best recruiter, and employers will certainly continue to exploit their sardari connections, but, owing to the essential limitations of the sardar, some other recruiting agency must be recognized.

* Labour contractor.

4. The Governor in Council has carefully considered the question whether a new Act is required or whether provision can be made for the extension of recruiting facilities with the retention of adequate control under the provisions of Act VI of 1901 as amended by Act VIII of 1915. The existing Act has been so altered and amended that its replacement by a simpler self-contained Act would have obvious advantages. On the other hand, there are serious objections to the introduction of new legislation at the present moment. It will suffice to mention one. The ideal is admittedly free recruitment and removal of all restrictions on the movement of labour. Control is a temporary expedient, the necessity for which may reasonably be expected to disappear within a short time. So long as a new Act is not absolutely necessary, it would be inadvisable to introduce new legislation which is intended to be only of a temporary character. The Governor in Council would therefore prefer to work under the existing law, if this is found feasible. In this connection he has been in correspondence with the Indian Tea Association and he has also had the advantage of personal discussions with the Association's representatives. At his suggestion, the Association formulated their proposals for the consideration of his Government with the intention of consulting other local Governments, if the Governor in Council considered their proposals to be practical. I am to enclose for the information of the Government of India a copy of the Association's letter with their draft scheme and a copy of this Government's reply.* It will be seen that the Association have proposed two alternative schemes. Under one scheme revised notifications under section 3 of the Act would be issued by the local Governments of the provinces from which emigrants are recruited. These notifications would restrict recruitment to recruitment by garden sardars and to other accredited agents holding a permit or licence from an employer. Rules regulating the transport of emigrants would be prescribed which would require every emigrant to pass through the depot of a licensed local agent, who would be given the power of an Inspector of Labourers and would maintain a register of all emigrants passing through his depot and satisfy himself that there had been no irregularity in the recruitment and that the emigrants were willing to go to Assam and understood what they were undertaking. The emigrants would finally pass inspecting officers of the Assam Labour Board at the points of entry into this province. The rules would also provide for the cancelling of the licence or permit of any recruiting agent in the event of misconduct. The Association suggests this power should be exercised by the Assam Labour Board, but the Governor in Council recommends that it should be vested in the District Magistrate or Superintendent of Emigration. This scheme follows very closely the suggestions in paragraph 6 of the Government of India's letter, but there is some doubt whether effect can be given to it under the present law.

In this Government's letter to the Association mention has been made of the possible legal objections to this scheme. If the legal difficulties do not exist or can be overcome without fresh legislation, the Governor in Council is strongly in favour of the scheme. It would eliminate the independent *arkati* altogether and the control which could be exercised by the cancellation of permits or licences and by the rules requiring emigrants to pass Inspectors of Labourers and the officers of the Assam Labour Board should effectively prevent any recurrence of the abuses which were in the past connected with professional recruiters. If, however, there are insuperable legal objections to this scheme, the Governor in Council would be prepared to adopt the alternative scheme put forward by the Association. Under that scheme all notifications under section 3 of the Act would be withdrawn and would not be reimposed except as a disciplinary measure against particular estates. All recruitment would be under section 92 read with section 93 of the Act, but would be regulated by similar rules as regards transport as would be provided under the first scheme. Although the independent *arkati* would not be eliminated and the control would not be quite so effective, the Governor in Council believes that the alternative scheme would provide sufficient safeguards against any serious abuse. In the recruiting districts care will be required in the selection of local agents, the provision of suitable depots and the maintenance of the proposed registers will be essential and frequent inspections would be desirable, but if the local Governments concerned concur in the proposed arrangements, the proposals of the Indian Tea Association offer a practical solution of the problem, by providing under the existing Act increased facilities for recruitment with sufficient control to prevent serious abuse.

5. The Governor in Council agrees that it would have been advisable to amend the constitution of the Assam Labour Board so as to make it more representative, in particular by the inclusion of officers of the recruiting districts. Any such alteration, however, in the constitution of the Board, would require an amendment of the Act and, for the reasons given, the Governor in Council is averse to fresh legislation being undertaken, if this can be avoided. The Governor in Council understands

* Not printed.

that the Indian Tea Association would be prepared to consider the advisability of including representatives of the recruiting districts among the members elected by them. If this were done, there could be little exception taken to the constitution of the Board.

6. The proposals of the Indian Tea Association would give the Assam Labour Board more direct supervision over recruiting operations than it exercises at present. Rules under Section 116 F., as inserted by Act VIII of 1915, could be framed to give the officers of the Board the necessary authority, but it would be impracticable, as adding too greatly to the expense, to place the Board's supervisors in charge of all recruiting depots.

No. Immgn. 3/7884 G.J., dated Shillong, the 8th February, 1929.
From G. E. SOAMES, Esq., C.I.E., I.C.S., Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam.

To the SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, Department of Industries and Labour.

Subject : Revision of the Assam Labour and Emigration Act, VI of 1901.

I am directed to refer to Mr. Lall's letter No. L.1266, dated the 3rd December, 1928, forwarding for the opinion of this Government a draft of the Assam Labour Recruitment Bill which the Government of India propose to introduce.

2. I am in the first place to say that the time allowed for a reply has been far too short to enable the Governor in Council to give to the Bill the careful consideration which it requires. Indeed, he has been compelled to reply before receiving the final views of the Indian Tea Association, and it may be necessary to supplement the reply now sent after the Association's views have been received.

3. The Governor in Council in the first place urges that the Bill should apply *proprio vigore* to the whole of British India. There is no reason why the Bombay Presidency should be excluded from its provisions. One result of such exclusion would be that a labourer recruited from that Presidency would not be a labourer within the meaning of the Bill, and could not be repatriated under Clause 9 if he had been recruited by coercion, undue influence, fraud or misrepresentation, or in any irregular way. Moreover, recent experience of recruits received from that Presidency show that it is desirable in the interests of all that recruitment in the Bombay Presidency should from the outset be subject to the same control as recruitment in other provinces.

4. The Government of Assam also recommend that the provisions of the Bill should apply to recruitment within the labour districts of Assam. Abuses in connection with the recruitment by professional *arkatis* within the labour districts have already occurred, and it was in consequence of such abuses that the Government of Assam, with the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council, conveyed in Mr. Clow's letter No. 11292, dated the 12th January, 1925, issued a notification under Section 3 of Act VI of 1901, prohibiting persons from recruiting, engaging, inducing or assisting any native of India, not being a native of a labour district, to emigrate from the district of Kamrup to any labour district. To prevent the recurrence of similar irregularities within the labour districts, the control over recruitment provided by the Bill should be extended to recruitment within Assam. Effect could be given to this proposal by deleting the definition of "recruiting district" in Clause 2 (1) (f) and substituting the words "for the labour districts" in place of the words "in recruiting districts" in Clause 5. No definition of the term "recruiting district" would then be required.

5. In order to provide for the extension of the tea industry into areas within the province of Assam beyond the districts declared to be labour districts in the Bill, the Governor in Council would suggest that the words "and any other district or backward tract in the province of Assam which the local Government may declare by notification in the "Gazette" to be a labour district" should be added at the end of the definition of "labour district" in Clause 2 (1) (f) of the Bill.

6. In the explanation under the definition of "labourer" in Clause 2 (1) (g) the Governor in Council would insert the words "or Nepal" after the words "an Indian State." A case recently occurred in which Nepalis were irregularly recruited for a tea estate in Assam, but no action could be taken under Act VI of 1901, as Nepal is not an Indian State, and a Nepali is not a native of India. Such cases are likely to recur, and it is necessary to provide for them in the Bill.

7. As the Bill now stands there is nothing to prevent persons working as recruiters who have not been deputed to do so by any employer. Such recruitment could be prohibited by the issue of a notification under Clause 3 (1), but in the absence

of any such notification there would be nothing to prevent professional *arkatis* recruiting without any authority from an employer with the object of selling any labourers they obtain to the highest bidder in the labour districts. Not only would such methods be legal, but they would be free from all restriction, as the *arkatis* would not be "recruiters" within the meaning of the Bill, and would not therefore be subject to the provisions of the Bill. The system of hawking labourers by professional *arkatis* is open to the gravest abuse and is condemned by all. The Governor in Council would, therefore, press for the inclusion in the Bill of a substantive clause prohibiting all recruitment otherwise than by garden sirdars or recruiters as defined in the Act.

8. The Government of India have deliberately provided in the Bill for the possibility of recruitment by garden sirdars or recruiters working independently of any local agent. To this the Governor in Council is opposed on the ground that serious irregularities will certainly occur if garden sirdars and recruiters are allowed to work independently. The Bill should require all garden sirdars and recruiters to work under the control of local agents, and should not leave to any local Government the discretion to allow independent recruitment by either agency.

9. The Governor in Council also objects to the power given to a local Government by Clause 3 (1) of the Bill to prohibit all recruitment other than recruitment through the agency of garden sirdars. The exercise of this power would handicap the tea industry in competition with other industries. There should be no prohibition of the agency of "recruiters" unless and until definite abuses have occurred. The control necessary to stop abuses can be secured by the power to prohibit individuals from working as recruiters, and no local Government should have the power to prohibit that method of recruitment altogether. Should the abuses be of so general and serious a nature as to justify the complete stoppage of this method of recruitment in any province, the power of prohibition should be vested not in the local Government but in the Government of India.

10. Clause 5 of the Bill vests in the Government of Assam the control over the grant of certificates to recruiters as well as to garden sirdars. As recruiters will usually be persons belonging to the recruiting areas, the control in their case could more properly be exercised by the local Government in whose jurisdiction the recruiter will work.

11. The Governor in Council also recommends that the authorities should be given wider powers of repatriation than those given by Clause 9 of the Bill. There have been cases in the past of the recruitment of labourers who have been totally unsuited to life and work on a tea estate in Assam. On many an occasion an exodus has occurred, and the Government of Assam have been forced to intervene and repatriate the labourers. Hitherto the tea industry has undertaken the cost of such repatriation, although under no legal obligation to do so. To provide for such cases the Governor in Council would suggest that the Bill should give power to repatriate and recover the cost in any case in which the authority is satisfied that the labourer was unsuited for work on a tea estate and had no means for his journey home, provided that the labourer concerned had been less than two years on the estate and had not previously been employed on an estate in Assam.

12. The supervision over local agents is vested in the Labour Board by Clause 11 (1) of the Bill, but the Board has no voice in the matter of their appointment. The Governor in Council would recommend that, as at present, the Board should have some say in the matter of the appointment of local agents.

13. The Governor in Council must take strong exception to the constitution of the Assam Labour Board proposed by the Bill. The reduction in the size of the Board is welcomed, but the inclusion of labour representatives is regarded as unjustifiable and likely to have unfortunate results. The Board, which should more properly be styled "the Assam Labour Recruitment Board," is concerned merely with recruitment, and on such a Board labour has no real claim to be represented. Labour can fairly claim representation in a body which deals with the conditions of labour at work, but with such conditions the Labour Board has no concern. The Labour Board has hitherto worked very satisfactorily as a Board of employers in which the whole industry had confidence. The appointment to the Board of labour representatives would destroy the present nature of the Board and would seriously impair the confidence it enjoys and consequently its efficiency. There could be no objection to the appointment to the Board of officials from the recruiting areas. In fact the appointment of such officials would be welcomed by all, and would give the local Governments of the recruiting areas greater confidence in the Board. The appointment of labour representatives, however, stands on quite a different footing. The accredited representatives of labour in any province are those who claim to represent the labour at work in that province and not the potential labour to be recruited for work in another province. Even if it is considered essential

that some proportion of the Board's members should be nominated to represent the potential labour from which recruitment is made, the Governor in Council could not in any case agree to an equality between the members representing labour and the members representing the employers. The Board is financed by the employers, and on that ground also, as well as for the reasons already advanced, the employers are entitled to predomination on the Board. The Governor in Council would not object to, though he cannot recommend, a Board consisting of six representatives of employers, two representatives of labour, and two official members to represent the recruiting areas, the representatives of labour and the recruiting areas being appointed by the Governor-General in Council. If, however, that is not accepted and the question resolves itself into a choice between a board on which labour would be given equal representation with the employers and the abolition of the Board, the Governor in Council would prefer that the Board should be abolished and the powers of control be vested in an official agency. The abolition of the Board is greatly to be deprecated, but it is preferable to its retention with the constitution proposed in the Bill.

No. Immgn. 61/1344G.J., dated Shillong, the 5th March, 1929.

From G. E. SOAMES, Esq., C.I.E., I.C.S., Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam,

To the SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, Department of Industries and Labour.

Subject : Assam Labour Recruitment Bill.

I am directed to refer to the correspondence ending with your letter No. 1015G.J., dated the 16th February, 1929, and to say that this Government have received from the Indian Tea Association a copy of the draft Bill which the Association submitted for the consideration of the Government of India with their letter No. 229.O., dated the 18th February, 1929. In the opinion of the Governor in Council, the Association's draft Bill is on sound lines, and meets most of the points raised in my letter No. 884G.J., dated the 8th February, 1929. The Government of Assam, however, regard it as important that the repatriation provisions should be widened as suggested in paragraph 11 of my letter, and they think it advisable, at any rate if the provisions are so widened, that the District Magistrate's powers in this respect should be subject to any orders made by the Local Government, as in Clause 9 of the Government of India's draft Bill. I am also to mention another point in this connection, which this Government omitted to notice before. Power should be given as in the present Act, to recover the cost of repatriation from the person recruiting the labourer or assisting him to proceed to a labour district, if there is no employer or the employer is not known. This provision is needed especially to enable the authorities to repatriate labourers who have been illegally recruited by persons who are not the representatives of any employer, but have recruited the labourers with the object of offering them to the highest bidder in Assam.

APPENDIX C.

No. Immgn. 149—3394G.J., dated Shillong, the 30th May, 1929.

From G. E. SOAMES, Esq., C.I.E., I.C.S., Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam,

To the SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, Department of Industries and Labour.

Subject.—Proposed Amendments to the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1928.

I am directed to refer to your letter No. L.1125, dated the 30th November, 1928, in which this Government have been asked to advise on the revision of the Workmen's Compensation Act. There are no representative organizations of employees in Assam, but the Governor in Council has consulted a large number of employers of labour and other non-officials as well as officials, and the difficulty involved in the revision of the Act is illustrated by the great variety of opinions expressed. Except on one point there is no unanimity and on only a few points is there any considerable weight of opinion in favour of any one view. The Governor in Council has carefully considered the opinions received, and I am now to state the conclusions at which he has arrived on the several questions involved in the reference in the order in which they have been summarised in paragraph 18 of the Government of India's letter.

2. (i) *To what fresh classes of employees, if any, should the Act be extended?*—Logically the Act should apply to workmen employed in all branches of industry, but the practical difficulties of administration make this at present impossible. The

scope of the Act can however be widened to some extent without serious difficulty. It can be applied to workmen employed in all organized industries, whether hazardous or not. In Assam for instance this extension would bring within the scope of the Act all workmen employed on tea gardens, whereas now it is restricted in its application to those who are employed in the factories. Secondly, the Governor in Council would recommend the application of the Act to all workmen, including casual labour, employed in hazardous industries. His Excellency in Council would include in the schedule for this purpose any industry in which machinery not worked by hand is used. Elephant catching operations might also be specifically included. The main objection to the inclusion of unorganized industries is that some employers would be unable to meet their obligations under the Act, but there is no reason why those who can afford to pay should escape because others cannot. Moreover in industries of the classes suggested there would not be many employers who would be unable to meet any liability which they might incur under the Act.

(ii) *Should any provisions be introduced for securing workmen against possible loss by reason of the inability of their employer to pay any compensation that may be due?*—In the opinion of the Governor in Council it is impossible to include in the Act any provision of this nature. No insurance scheme could be worked in this province and, in the absence of such a scheme, there can be no practical provision to protect a workman against an employer's inability to pay compensation. In the case of contractors or licensees working under Government it might be possible to require them to insure as a condition of the grant of their contract or license, but it is not possible to include any provision on this account in the Act.

(iii) *To what extent, if any, should recurring payments be substituted for the lump sums at present payable under the Act?*—There is a great diversity of opinion on the advisability of providing in the Act for recurring payments of compensation. The objection to lump sum payments is that they are likely to be squandered. On the other hand, with migratory labour it would be difficult in some cases to arrange for recurring payments. The Governor in Council would prefer that this matter should be left by the Act to the discretion of the Commissioner who should direct that the compensation should be paid in such form as would appear to be most suitable to the circumstances of the dependants.

(iv) *Should the scales of compensation be enhanced either for the more poorly paid workmen or generally?*—With a few exceptions those who have been consulted agree that some increase in the rates of compensation is required. Some favour a general increase, while others would restrict the increase to more poorly paid employees. As to the amount of the increase, whether it be general or restricted, there is no consensus of opinion. There has been little practical experience of the working of the Act in Assam, and His Excellency in Council, while recommending that some increase is desirable, would leave to other provinces to suggest the extent to which an increase should be given.

(v) *Should the waiting period be reduced either generally or in the case of those workmen who are disabled for more than ten days, and if so, to what extent?*—The Governor in Council is definitely opposed to the "dating back" system on the ground that it will inevitably lead to malingerer, an evil which cannot be checked on account of the lack of an adequate medical staff in this province. Any serious reduction in the waiting period would certainly lead to an increase in cases, but that is a less serious evil. The Governor in Council would suggest that the Act should provide for a waiting period of not less than a week with the proviso that, in the case of permanent disablement, compensation should be payable from the date on which the disablement arose.

(vi) *Should the list of relatives entitled to claim compensation be enlarged?*—In order to meet the difficulties which the Government of India have mentioned in paragraph 8 of their letter, the Governor in Council would suggest that the following words should be added to the definition of "dependant" given in section 2 (1) (d) of the Act:—"any other relative who proves to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that he or she was actually dependent on the deceased workman". This, with the discretion which the Commissioner now enjoys regarding the distribution of the compensation, will enable him to award the compensation to the persons who are most fitted to receive it. The objection to the proposal is that it will involve more work for the Commissioner, but that cannot be avoided.

(vii) *Should proof of dependence be required in order to enable a relative to claim compensation?*—If the suggestion made above be accepted, it will be unnecessary to include in the Act any further provision requiring proof of dependence to be given.

(viii) *Should the compensation payable vary with the number of dependants and with the extent of their dependence on the deceased workman?*—The Governor in Council is opposed to the suggestion that compensation should vary with the number of dependants and the extent of their dependence. Wages do not vary with the number of the workman's dependants, and there is no reason why an employer's liability for

compensation should vary with the number of his workman's dependants or the extent of their dependence. Moreover the adoption of any such provision would make employers chary of employing any man with a large number of dependants, a result which is greatly to be deprecated.

(ix) *Should section 12 of the Act be amended—(a) so as to place the ultimate liability for compensation on the person directly employing the workmen in every case, or (b) so as to place the ultimate liability for compensation on the principal, or (c) in any other manner?*—The Governor in Council would prefer that the Act should impose the liability in all cases on the principal, leaving him to protect himself by special contracts with his contractor or sub-contractor. This would simplify the working of the Act and, as the principal is in a position to protect himself, it can cause no injury to him. There should of course be a proviso as in sub-clause (4) of section 12 that where the accident occurred elsewhere than on or about the premises of the principal, the person immediately employing the workmen shall be liable and not the principal.

(x) *Should any penalty be provided in the Act for failure to comply with the provisions of section 16?*—The Act should certainly provide a penalty for failure to submit returns. Prosecutions under section 176 of the Indian Penal Code would not often be successful, and the provision of a penalty in the Act itself would be the only effective means of securing the prompt submission of returns.

(xi) *Should employers be required to submit returns of accidents in respect of which compensation has not been paid and if so, to what accidents should this provision apply?*—It is clearly desirable that returns of all accidents, whether compensation has been paid or not, should be submitted so that the Commissioner and the Government may be in a position to judge of the extent to which insured persons succeed in getting compensation. To meet the difficulty referred to by the Government of India in paragraph 12 of their letter, the Governor in Council would suggest that employers should be required to submit returns of all accidents "arising out of and in the course of employment or suffered otherwise by an employee or occurring on the employer's premises." This would include accidents for which the employer might not be liable, and the inclusion of such accidents in the return would not therefore be an admission of liability by the employer. There might be a proviso that no accident of which the victim returned to work within the waiting period need be included.

(xii) *Should a dependant claiming compensation be relieved of the necessity of approaching the employer for the settlement of his claim?*—For the reasons given by the Government of India in paragraph 13 of their letter His Excellency in Council agrees that a dependant should not be required to approach the employer first before applying to the Commissioner for the settlement of his claim.

(xiii) *What steps, if any, should be taken to ensure that dependants who may have valid claims for compensation do not lose compensation through ignorance of their rights?*—There is a strong body of opinion in this province in favour of the proposal that the Act should provide for some means of ensuring that dependants do not lose compensation through ignorance of their rights. Of the alternative methods suggested by the Government of India some favour one, some another and some a combination of two or more. The Governor in Council does not attach much weight to the argument that a Commissioner will be regarded as a partisan if he initiates proceedings. Magistrates initiate proceedings, but they are not suspect on that account, and His Excellency in Council can see no valid objection to a Commissioner being given power to initiate proceedings. Employers should be compelled to furnish returns of all fatal accidents, showing whether compensation had been or would be deposited or not and, if not, giving reasons why liability was not accepted. The Commissioner should then be authorised to initiate proceedings at once in any case in which there appeared to be grounds for holding that the employer was liable. In practice there would be little difference between the Commissioner's initiating the proceedings and his informing the dependants of their rights, especially in this country where the people concerned are generally illiterate and ignorant. Moreover if the Commissioner is empowered to initiate proceedings, much time will be saved. The Governor in Council also recommends that the Commissioner should be authorised to initiate proceedings on the information furnished by any Inspector of Factories or Mines without the necessity of a formal complaint by the Inspector.

(xiv) *Should employers be required to maintain a register of relatives of their workmen?*—If employers maintain a register showing the names of the relatives of their workmen, the working of the Act would undoubtedly be simplified, but the Governor in Council does not consider that it is feasible with the existing conditions of labour to require all employers to maintain such a register. Where an employer is required by any law in force to maintain a register of his employees, he might be required by a provision in this Act to include in such register the names of the workmen's nearest relatives. Beyond that it would not be practicable to go in any legal enactment. Employers however should be encouraged as far as possible to keep a record of the relatives of their workmen.

(xv) *Should Commissioners be empowered to call on employers depositing inadequate compensation for fatal accidents to make a further deposit?*—On this point alone the opinions received are unanimous, and the Governor in Council agrees that the Act should authorise the Commissioner to call on employers to make a further deposit if they deposit inadequate compensation for a fatal accident.

(xvi) *Should provision be made for the suspension of distribution by the Commissioner pending the disposal of an appeal against his decision?*—Logically the Act should undoubtedly provide for the suspension of the distribution of compensation pending the disposal of an appeal. Provision however must be made to prevent unnecessary hardship to dependants, as an appeal may pend for a long time. The Governor in Council would therefore insert the proviso that the Commissioner should be authorised to make payments as subsistence allowances in special cases where he found this necessary to prevent hardship. Any sum so paid pending an appeal would be irrecoverable if the employer won his appeal, but that cannot be avoided. The indigent and helpless must not be deprived of all means of subsistence while an appeal is pending.

THE SURMA VALLEY BRANCH, INDIAN TEA ASSOCIATION.

Note on the Tea Industry in the Surma Valley.—The Surma Valley Branch, Indian Tea Association, covers the two contiguous Tea Districts of Cachar and Sylhet and represents 90 per cent. of the area under tea in the Surma Valley.

The Tea District of Cachar.—This district is comprised of 177 plantations occupying a gross area of 283,501 acres, of which 56,965 acres are planted with tea, of the remainder a considerable portion has been taken up in small plots by the coolie for his own rice, sugarcane and other cultivation, the rest is either pasture land, or still unclaimed jungle.

The Tea District of Sylhet.—This district is comprised of 157 plantations occupying a gross area of 315,495 acres, of which 89,723 acres are planted with tea, the rest being jungle, pasture and cultivated land, as in Cachar.

Labour.—Immigrants from the tea garden recruiting areas pass through the debarkation depot at Goalundo (Bengal).

The total population living on tea garden land in the Surma Valley numbers 323,329, of which 178,445 are employees—the others being children and dependants.

The birth and death rate per mille in 1927-28 was 31.73 and 18.66 respectively.

Employees of the tea plantations cultivate for their own profit 49,887 acres of land, 40,641 acres of which they hold as tenants of gardens at a very nominal rental, and the remainder they hold direct from Government or other landholders. In addition to these figures, ex-tea garden coolies have opened out and cultivated 35,698 acres as settlement holders under Government, and 12,229 acres as sub-tenants.

The relations between employer and employees are of a cordial nature, and there has been no serious trouble for several years, although there have been a few petty and abortive strikes, but these can in no way be attributed to the management of the gardens.

Production of Tea.—The average production of tea per acre in 1928 was:—

| | |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Cachar | 478 lbs. |
| Sylhet | 536 lbs. |

The average outturn is considerably lower than in other tea producing districts, and the teas being of an inferior quality, realize lower prices; this is probably due to less favourable climatic and topographical conditions. These two factors of low outturn and low price undoubtedly cause the fluctuations of the market to be acutely felt in the Surma Valley.

With regard to the schedule issued by you, this branch has been in collaboration with Calcutta, and finds itself in entire agreement with the written statement which will be submitted to you by the Chairman, Indian Tea Association, Calcutta, and therefore it is considered any recapitulation by this branch is unnecessary.

THE ASSAM OIL COMPANY, LIMITED.

This company is engaged in the winning, refining and marketing of mineral oil and has been operating in this district for 30 years. Geographically it is not well situated owing to the long and expensive railway lead to markets, and until nine

years ago development was consequently hampered. Dating from a change of management in 1920, and more particularly from 1926, its activities have increased very materially, not on account of the immediate profitableness of the undertaking but because the new directors decided to find capital to develop the properties on a bigger scale with a view to eventual profitableness and also with a view to keeping pace in the matter of housing, sanitation, anti-malarial measures, water supply, education and the like amenities for labour in the developing period that must intervene before any profit can be realized. In preliminary illustration of the policy adopted it may be stated that with the exception of a few mat walled lines built during the kerosene rate war all quarters provided for employees of whatever grade are "pucca"; the directors in June, 1927, sanctioned further expenditure of Rupees four lakhs for this purpose, of which the unexpended balance (Rs. 83,675 at date) will be used by March, 1930. A water flush sanitation scheme, to cost Rs. 120,000, for all cooly lines, was sanctioned in 1928, and during the current year the laying of pipes and construction of septic tanks has been proceeding, expenditure to date being Rs. 97,500. This scheme will be in operation by the end of the current cold season. Water is supplied from artesian wells and education is free.

In general, plans are in hand for keeping pace with the growing population's requirements. The company now employs about 8,000, men 300 women and 200 boys.

I.—Recruitment.

1. Origin of Labour.—

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| Bengal | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 2,450 |
| Assam | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1,670 |
| Nepal | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1,000 |
| United Provinces | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1,200 |
| Bihar and Orissa | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 50 |
| Central Provinces | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 100 |
| Chota Nagpur | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 140 |
| Madras | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 20 |
| Bombay | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 4 |
| Punjab | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 350 |
| Manipur | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 21 |
| Darjeeling | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 32 |
| China | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 2 |

These figures will of course vary somewhat from time to time. This shows the distribution of origins on our 1928 list.

2. It is estimated that about 50 per cent. of the Assamese and 25 per cent. of the Nepalis return to their villages every year in April and May. About 25 per cent. of the Chittagonians return yearly but at no fixed period.

The remainder of the men return to their homes for a few months every three or four years.

3. Applicants for work apply to the Labour Bureau, except in the case of a few skilled specialists men are not recruited from outside the oilfields.

7. Unemployment has never been a problem since for many years the company's activities have been extending.

Unemployment at any time would merely be the result of reduction in numbers of construction labour when some extension work is completed, or alternatively due to the temporary presence of applicants coming by rail to look for work.

8. (i) Owing to the recent growth of the company no useful figures can be given of the relation of length of service among workmen to numbers at present employed. It has been observed that skilled labour stays in many cases for many years, while cooly labour is migratory—frequently staying not more than six months. When coolies become even semi-skilled and by a little experience or ability obtain particular jobs there is a tendency to stay for a year or so.

(ii) With the exception of a few Nagas, who come in yearly for work as jungle clearers, and Noonias, also seasonal visitors, as earth workers, no casual labour is employed by the Assam Oil Company.

(iii) *Absenteeism.*—(a) The desire to go back to one's own country and relatives after making some money. This applies chiefly among semi-skilled labour and Nepali coolies whose home country is very distant.

(b) The seasonal call for the cultivation of family land, in the case of those whose homes are not very far distant. This occurs about May and November. About 25 per cent. only of absentees return after varying periods.

(c) No statistics available.

II.—Staff Organization.

12. Senior staff is engaged from the United Kingdom. Subordinate staff is engaged locally—sundry posts are held by, for example, Indian trained chemists.

13. *Relations between Staff and rank and file.*—Contented.

14. (i) In the refinery and workshops timekeeping is carried out through the common system of hanging metal tokens on a board when going to and coming from work. This is supervised and checked, and time-sheets prepared by clerks under the control of departmental heads.

In the oilfields, which is an unenclosed area, men are checked at work by clerks under the control of departmental heads.

The whole is checked by the accounts department.

(ii) Each man's wages, as calculated from the time-sheet, is counted out by the wages section of our accounts department (they are separate from the timekeepers) and put into a tin box. This tin box has a number corresponding with the man's number on the pay-sheet and with a pay-out token which is handed out to the man on pay day by the European under whom he works; the latter has the wages sheet of his department. Pay out takes place under the supervision of a European accountant and the head of the man's department.

15. (i) Certain contracts for construction work are given out to local contractors and are carried out by contractors' own labour. Also a certain amount of transport work is undertaken by a contractor.

(ii) All the company's operations in connection with the winning and treatment of oil are carried out by the company's staff; only small auxiliary work, e.g., building quarters and transport, is contracted out.

(iii) Control is exercised by the company's engineers to see that the work is properly carried out. Some contractors' coolies are housed in company's quarters. All are given free medical attention by the company, and all use the company's water supply. Working conditions are to all intents and purposes the same for the contractor's men as for the company's men.

III.—Housing.

16. *Extent to which Housing is Provided.*—(i) *By employers.*—Over 70 per cent. of the company's employees are accommodated in company's quarters.

(ii) *By Government or other public agency.*—Nil.

(iii) *By private landlords.*—The village adjoining the oilfield is small and little rented accommodation is available.

(iv) Some workers have settled in houses built by themselves on waste land belonging to the company.

18. (i) As far as has been economically possible quarters have been built to suit the various classes they are intended to house.

(ii) The majority of the company's quarters are single storied and built of brick, with brick drains round them and with due regard to airiness, light and drainage.

(iii) Sweepers are allotted to each barrack area and the conservancy is under the supervision of the medical officer. Water is supplied by means of stand pipes to all barrack areas.

19. All company's quarters are fully occupied and workers who live outside are eager to secure accommodation in company's quarters.

20. All company's quarters are rent free.

21. There is no subletting. The workmen of other employers, apart from the small amount of contractor's labour mentioned in 15 (iii) do not occupy our quarters. There has been no trouble about discharged men leaving company's quarters.

IV.—Health.

23. (i) During the period 1926 to date the mortality rate among company labour and those of others in the station with whom our medical organization came into touch was 7 per 1,000.

(ii) The ascertainable birth-rate was 3.3 per 1,000, and infant mortality (under 2 years) 0.5 per 1,000. There is no statutory registration system in force and our figures cover only our whole labour force, contractors' labour, and others who seek medical attention or whose need for it is made known.

(iii) (a) In the fields the men generally work in the open, but drilling well derricks provide as much shelter against sun and rain as working conditions permit. Refinery and workshops are newly built, are light and airy, and come under the Factories Act.

(b) None of the company's work is done in the men's homes.

24. (i) The company employs a whole-time European medical officer, with a staff of five Indian doctors and 22 dressers and compounders. There is an hospital with ample accommodation and two dispensaries for the treatment of out-patients. Medicines and medical attention are given by the company free of charge. All these facilities are available to contractors' labour.

(ii) Nothing is provided by the Government.

(iii) Three dais are on the hospital staff.

(iv) *By other agencies.*—Nothing.

25. (i) Employees in general avail themselves of our medical facilities with great readiness, although a few have some hesitation about becoming in-patients.

(ii) The female population is small. A few become in-patients in hospital, but generally medicines are sought for them by their husbands.

26. (a) Latrines are provided in the refinery and workshops. Field workers are seldom employed in any one place. The fields are surrounded by jungle and men generally go there.

(ii) *Drinking water.*—Available.

(b) (i) Latrines are provided in all barrack areas. An automatic water-flush system is now being installed.

(ii) *Drinking water.*—Stand pipes in all barrack areas.

(iii) Married quarters are supplied with bathing places. Stand pipes with cement washing places are provided in the barrack areas.

29. (i) Industrial diseases are not found.

(ii) A review of our medical records from the year 1926 to date gives returns as follows :—

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|----|----|----|--|
| Cholera | .. | .. | .. | Nil. |
| Choleraic diarrhoea | .. | .. | .. | 10 cases per annum. Mortality 25 per cent. |
| Malaria | .. | .. | .. | 9,000 cases per annum, each separate attack counted as one case. |
| Hookworm | .. | .. | .. | 12 cases per annum. These are serious; we have no indication of prevalence of mild or early cases. |
| Dysentery | .. | .. | .. | 500 cases per annum. |
| Blackwater fever | .. | .. | .. | 3 in whole period—1 fatal. |
| Plague | .. | .. | .. | Nil. |
| Typhoid and para-typhoid | .. | .. | .. | 12 cases per annum. |

30. *Sickness Insurance.*—In principle full pay is given whilst in hospital, half-pay whilst under treatment as out-patients and all medical treatment is free. The full-pay period is 2 months (half-pay being given thereafter for 4 months) in the case of employees of service over five years. The periods are halved in the case of employees under 5 years' service.

These generous terms were given at a time when the district was considered essentially unhealthy and although health conditions generally have since been greatly improved, the terms have not been changed. It is unlikely that any system of sickness insurance would confer greater benefits overall on our workers, and in the meantime we consider it undesirable to introduce such a system.

V.—Welfare.

32. *Extent of Welfare Work*—(i) *By employer.*—A European Labour Superintendent is employed by the company. He receives complaints from the men and investigates their grievances.

(ii) *By other agencies.*—Nil.

34. (i) *Provision of Refreshments, Shelters and Crèches.*—Nil.

(ii) *Provision for Physical Culture, Recreation, and Amusements.*—An Indian club has been provided by the company for staff of clerical and similar grades, for indoor games and amateur theatricals.

Sports grounds have been provided by the company for all Indians wishing to play cricket and football. Football is becoming popular.

36. *Provision of Educational Facilities by Employers*—(i) *For adult workers*—Nil.

(ii) *For half-time workers.*—We employ no men on half-time.

(iii) *For workers' children.*—Two schools are provided by the company, one for boys and one for girls. A staff of 7 teachers is employed.

(iv) *Extent to which used.*—Attendances for a long time were not encouraging, but recently advantage has been taken of the educational facilities provided and there are now about 90 boys and 40 girls attending.

VIII.—Workmen's Compensation.

51. The company voluntarily applies all the provisions of the Workmen's Compensation Act to all men in its employ who are injured at work.

IX.—Hours.

A.—Factories.

55. (i) Normally shift workers work an eight-hour day for six days a week. There are some processes in the refinery which are continuous and for which special arrangements are made.

Day workers work an 8½-hour day and 7 hours on Saturdays or 49½ hours a week.

(ii) Shift workers are not called upon to work overtime. Day workers are only called upon to work overtime when the completion of some job is necessary.

(iii) Normally there is no spread over. In the event of a breakdown in the refinery, which is unusual, it is estimated that at the outside only 10 per cent. of the workers would be in any way affected.

56. The normal week is 6 working days.

60. (iv) Four holidays a year with full pay.

61. Sunday is the normal day of rest.

D.—Other Establishments.

78. (i) Fields shift workers work an eight-hour day and a 7-day week. Day workers work an 8½-hour day and a 7-hour Saturday, making 49½ hours week.

(ii) Shift workers are not called upon to work overtime. Day workers only work overtime in order to enable some important job to be completed.

(iii) In the oilfields there is practically no spreadover.

79. *Days worked per week.*—Shift workers, 7 days. Day workers, 6 days.

XII.—Wages.

96. (i) The average cooly wage is 14 annas a day. Semi-skilled and skilled workers obtain up to Rs. 3-8 a day according to their work and ability.

(ii) We understand that bustee labourers ordinarily earn 12 annas per day.

102. Overtime is paid at the rate of straight time based on an eight-hour day. Sunday work is normally paid for at the rate of pay and a half, but in some departments is paid for at double rate.

106. (i) The fines collected in 1928 amounted to Rs. 3,930-8, but this consisted mainly of the value of cooly beds not returned by workmen at the time of leaving the company's service.

Coolies on engagement are issued with beds. If these beds are not returned when a man leaves the company's employ, a sum of Rs. 6 per bed is collected from the man to whom the bed was issued. There are no other deductions.

(ii) Fines are kept in a special account and are used at the discretion of the general manager to assist objects of interest to the men.

(iii) We see no necessity for legislation.

107. (i) *Periods for which wages paid.*—Monthly.

(ii) Wages are paid from the 7th to the 15th day of each month depending on the man's work and department.

(iii) We see no necessity for legislation.

(iv) Unclaimed wages are kept in a suspense account and are paid to workmen if and when claimed at some later date.

109. (i) Men on rates of pay of not less than Rs. 30 a month may join a provident fund scheme under which the employee subscribes up to one month's pay in the year and the company contributes a similar sum. Interest at 5 per cent. per annum is paid on the balance at each member's credit.

110. *Annual or Other Leave.*—(i) *Extent to which taken by workers.*—Figures are not available as regards workers on daily rates.

(ii) *Extent to which countenanced and/or assisted by employers.*—Any man may apply for leave when he wishes and his department makes every effort to spare him. Men returning within 6 weeks are sure of reinstatement and this is generally extended for a reasonable further period if the employee shows cause for it.

Annual leave with pay is only granted to a limited class such as clerks, drillers, and others on a consolidated rate of not less than Rs.100 a month.

(iii) *Extent and consequential loss to worker of back lying wages.*—All wages are paid up to the employee before going on leave.

(iv) *Desirability of fair wages clause in public contracts.*—Desirable.

Mr. C. K. BESBORUAH, BOLOMA TEA ESTATE, NAKACHARI ASSAM.

I. Recruitment.

7 (1) Under the existing circumstances in Assam tea gardens, there is no possibility of unemployment of labourers in the near future. If however taking it for granted that a tea garden abandons much of its tea areas, the labourers are not thrown off from employments for the sake of retrenchment as they are either employed in improving the garden lands or opening up new areas for cultivation, for cultivating paddy for the garden and for themselves.

Of the gardens which do not possess enough paddy lands to provide for the coolies, the case will be quite different, but even if such gardens stop work for special reasons the thrown-off coolies will get enough employment in other gardens which are in running condition.

(ii) (a) Dismissals among labourers are so rare that this can be taken as quite a negligible factor. Any labourer found guilty of doing his work dishonestly forfeits the full or half the wage of the work which rectifies him.

(ii) (b) The coolies are at liberty to leave the garden if they are dissatisfied with the management.

(iii) and (iv) When there is no possibility of unemployment in a garden these points do not arise.

8 (ii) In all seasons of the year the coolies living within the garden find enough employment. Over and above these permanent coolies the garden employs casual Assamese workers who come to work in the garden when their own transplantations of paddy and harvest are over.

(iii) (a and b) When a day's work means a day's income to a coolie, he does not remain absent from his work unless he is sick. He takes leave for a day or half a day to look after the household duties. They take leave to cultivate the paddy lands apportioned to them by the garden. They take leave to see a friend or relative in a distant basty which happens once or twice a year.

(c) They lose the wages of the days they remain on leave. Those who remain absent for serious sickness are kept in the garden hospital and are fed from the garden until they are fit.

II. Staff Organization.

10. The garden is divided into several blocks which are given different numbers. The coolies are divided to work in particular blocks under different sirdars who are promoted from the coolies. Several coolie sirdars under one mohurer. Over all mohurers there is one head mohurer.

Checking of the works of the coolies is done by the sirdars under the supervision of the mohurer. All mohurers submit their reports to the head mohurer after the completion of the days work assigned to them.

The head mohurer supervises the work of all the mohurers. The manager in consultation with the head mohurer ascertains the multifarious indoor and outdoor works of the garden and thus assigns the number of men required for each work.

The Ganti mohurer remaining present in such consultation, notes down the work and the number of men required for each work at the suggestion of the manager.

Thus works are distributed within the garden. The manager personally checks all the works. The office is managed by a few clerks.

11 and 12. Recruitment and training of supervising staff, superior and subordinate.

Intelligent and competent men among the coolies are selected to become sirdars and chowkidars, who manage the men working under them.

Literate young local men are appointed on probation as mohurers. If they can show competency in managing the sirdars and their men, they are appointed permanently.

Assistant managers are generally appointed from men having previous experience in garden works. If the managers are not proprietors of the gardens they are appointed from men having previous experience in other gardens.

Competent head mohurers are often promoted to assistant-managership and managership.

12 (ii) In my last statement I have shown how sirdars and chowkidars are appointed from the coolies. The reason of their not being appointed as mohurers and in the clerical line, is their inability to read and write which is essentially required for such posts.

But their promotion in other lines is kept always open. In my workshop two ordinary coolies are now driving and making small repairs to engines and other machinery which they learnt here. My motor-car and lorries are driven by coolies. Moreover there are coolie smiths, carpenters in my garden earning higher wages.

13 (i) Relations between the staff and the labourers is cordial. The manager is not only the paymaster of the coolies but settles all minor disputes through a coolie panchayat for which they are not to go to the law courts.

14 (i) The head officer in charge of the workshop is the timekeeper.

(ii) How and by whom wages actually are paid to workers.

The manager or other head of the staff pays the labourers weekly, i.e., on the local market day, and the staff on the 1st of every month.

III. Housing.

16 (i) Within the garden area a high piece of land has been selected to erect houses in separate rows for the coolies at the expense of the garden.

18 (i) and (ii) The quarters for bachelors are separated from family men.

For the bachelors a room is given for cooking and sleeping. Two men live in a room and sleep on wooden bedsteads supplied by the garden. Often the men mess together from 2 to 3 according to their own convenience. They husk their corn with a dekhi.

For a family a room is provided for cooking and sleeping from the garden. Bedsteads are supplied to them. They husk their corn in the dekhi.

No rent is charged from the occupants of the houses by the garden.

The coolies here rear pigs and goats for which they erect enclosures at their own expense. Bamboos and branches of trees required for such enclosures are given free from the garden forests.

The coolies are allowed to keep cows for which sheds are erected by the garden away from the coolie lines, where the cattle are kept at night. Cattle shed cleaners and cattle boys are appointed to look after the cattle whose pay is paid by the owners of the cattle. So that the caretakers are properly and regularly paid, the garden authorities look after it.

The coolies sell the milk of their own cows and use their bullocks in tilling the lands given to them by the garden for their paddy cultivation.

The coolie families who have permanently settled have been given lands to erect houses and to cultivate vegetables and other fruit trees according to their wants. They live in basties, away from the coolie lines. These bastiwallas are not to pay any rent of their "bari" to the garden, and they utilize the products of the soil occupied by them. They have cows, pigs, goats, pigeons, ducks, and fowls, etc., of their own. I mention here of a coolie family bastiwalla which earns over Rs. 300 annually by selling goats' and cows' milk.

The garden possesses much paddy lands. One pura of such lands (a little more than an acre) is given to each coolie or coolie family to grow paddy for their own use by the garden at a special concession rate, which is Rs. 4 to Rs. 8 per pura.

The coolies who have no bullocks of their own sublet such lands to other people in "adhiya" (half-half) system.

(iii) On both extremities of a row of coolie houses, lamp-posts are provided at the expense of the garden.

The garden has excavated a tank for drinking purposes for the coolies. They wash their clothes in a brook which, however, dries up in the dry season. They are not allowed to drink the brook water.

20. In coolie lines erected by the garden the coolies live there rent free.

In basti lands belonging to the garden, where the permanent settlers live, the basti lands are given free of rent.

N.B.—But paddy lands given for cultivation to the basty coolies are given at a special concession rate, which is Rs. 4 to Rs. 8 per pura.

21. Under the existing system in tea gardens no subletting of houses ever takes place.

Eviction is so rare that this is a negligible factor.

22. Moral effect on the workers under the above housing conditions has proved satisfactory.

IV.—Health.

23. (i) Total average mortality from the figures of last two years, i.e., 1927 and 1928, is 17 out of 740 coolies.

(ii) Birth-rate and infant mortality; methods of registration; average birth-rate is 18 for 1927 and 1928; information of births and deaths are sent to the Deputy Commissioner's office at Jorhat.

(iii) (a) At working places they take fried rice or "chara" and tea is supplied to them free from the garden at mid-day.

(b) At home in the morning and evening they take rice, dal, vegetables, and fish on market days. They also take ducks, fowl, and sometimes goats, on market days.

24. All the patients within the garden are well looked after by the garden doctors, who remain in charge of an hospital with a full stock of medicine. The patients are not charged for the treatment nor for the diets given to them in their long illness.

26. (i) The coolies go to the jungles to answer the call of nature.

(ii) There are two tanks from which they take water for drinking purposes.

(iii) For bathing and washing purposes they use the brook water and the water from the tank in front of their lines.

29. Cholera among the coolies here is rare. They often suffer from malaria in June, July and August, to prevent which quinine is administered to all the coolies twice a week.

I believe that amongst my coolies there is no case of hookworm.

30. (iii) The coolies do not object here to take western forms of treatment for their diseases.

31. (i) A woman is given leave of two months before and three months after child-birth. The husband or her children are to look after her during this period.

When a woman brings her child to show to the manager she is given Rs. 5 only.

(iii) Some sort of legislation is urgently required to ameliorate the condition of such women.

VII.—Safety.

43 and 46. The engine room and other dangerous machinery is always kept strongly barricaded, as required by the factory regulations for the prevention of accidents.

44. Accidents in Boloma garden are nil.

45. Prevailing factory rules in Assam tea gardens are quite sufficient to guard against accidents. No new suggestions are required.

48. As the medical officer of the garden always remains in the garden the first-aid can be given to all patients.

IX.—Hours.

A.—Factories.

55. (i) Though the normal working hours are eight, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with an interval of one hour at mid-day, the coolies do not work more than 6½ hours generally.

(ii) *Actual*.—In job works only the men are to work for full eight hours.

(iii) Spreadover, i.e., relation between hours worked and hours during which the worker is on call. All the men and women congregate in front of the workshop nearly half an hour before 8 a.m. every morning to learn from the Ganti mohurer their day's duty.

In the withering room, rolling house, drying room, and fermenting room the working hours are not bound by any hard and fast rules, as the leaves cannot be sent to the factory until they are well withered, which depends solely on weather conditions. If for special reasons the machines are worked at night, extra hands are employed for such works for which extra wages are paid.

56. Per week they work for six days.

57. *Effect of 60 hours' Restrictions.*—As 48 is the total number of maximum hours a coolie is to work in a garden this question does not arise.

58. *Effect of Daily Limit.*—For the limitation put on the 8 hours for working per day a labourer can look after his household duties.

59. There is no necessity or possibility of reducing the working hours per diem.

60. (i) (a) In hot days the labourers take one hour's rest at mid-day for taking light refreshment. In the winter season they do the same. (b) The labourers go out for work taking their morning meal.

(ii) *Suitability of the law.*—No need.

(iii) *Suitability of hours during which factory is working.*—Cannot be regulated, as it depends on the time when the green leaves are well withered to be sent to the factory.

(iv) On the market day of each week they get a holiday. Moreover, they get one day for Durgapuja and two days for Fagua as holidays within a year. They have special pujas of their own for which they take leave.

61. (i) Friday, which is the local market day of the week, is the day of rest for the coolies.

D.—Other Establishments.

(a) *Plantations.*—Actual working hours in a tea garden varies from normal hours for the following reasons, e.g., a labourer who finishes hoeing 30×1 nals of earth before mid-day or before 5 p.m., gets the full day's wage, and he is at liberty to go home. But in most cases without going home he tries to earn more wages by doing more work.

(ii) Women are used in plucking green leaves. They work eight hours in the garden with an interval of an hour at mid-day for light refreshment. As they pluck leaves on ticca system, the more leaves they can pluck the more money they can earn.

X.—Special Questions relating to Women, Young Adults and Children.

82. No children are employed either in the garden, factory or in the garden. Only children between the age of 7 to 10 accompany their parents to help them in plucking, weeding, manuring, etc., which are suitable to their constitution. It is at the option of the parents to take their children to the garden to help them in their ticca works.

N.B.—In most other gardens children are employed in different works.

83. The existing system of employing women for plucking leaves without mixing them up with men has proved satisfactory.

Women are not allowed to work in factories. Only in the stalking room situated in one extremity of the factory, weak and convalescent women are engaged to sort out the stalks from the manufactured tea.

84. (i) Hours and intervals of work of children depend entirely at the will of their parents, whom they help in their ticca works. The parents give them rest whenever they find their children tired.

(ii) Seven is the minimum and ten is the maximum age for such children.

85. *Double Employment of Children.*—No.

86. Young adults are employed in grazing and looking after the cattle. In the factory they are employed in the leaf house to spread the green leaves and to collect them for the rolling machine. These young adults are given every opportunity to learn other indoor and outdoor works.

88. The open air ticca works, such as plucking, weeding, light pruning and manuring for women are rather conducive to their health.

XII.—Wages.

96. (i) An adult coolie gets Rs. 9-12 and a woman gets Rs. 8-2-0 per month at Boloma T.E. At the above rates a man gets 6 annas and a woman or a young adult gets 5 annas per diem besides extra ticca wages.

Every man, woman or young adult to earn these wages must finish some measured works fixed by the garden. If he can finish the fixed works allotted to him before time, the labourer begins extra work, for which an extra wage is paid. Thus a labourer can earn double wages per diem. Those who work in the workshop their wages are fixed.

(ii) In the surrounding agricultural villages a few cultivators engage labourers temporarily during transportation of paddy and in harvesting time at 8 annas per diem, which induces the garden coolies to leave off their permanent work of the garden. But such seasonal works being very limited, only a few coolies living in basties can find such employments.

97. (i) and (ii) To state whether the present wage of a coolie has appreciably increased from their old system of monthly pay, is difficult to state.

In old times an adult coolie used to get Rs. 6 and a woman Rs. 5 per month of 26 or 27 days; that is, a man earned 3 annas 9 pice and a woman 3 annas per diem. According to the prevailing system, the old system of whole-day work of eight hours has been changed to contract or unit works. As for instance other gardens pay 4 annas for a full hazira to a coolie if he hoes 30 by 1 nal or 35 by 1 nal. In my garden a man is required to hoe 30 by 1 nal of land to earn a full hazira of 6 annas.

An average man, provided he is healthy and strong, if he works honestly, and if that work is checked honestly, can hoe a full hazira of area. If he hoes less than the hazira area of land he earns proportionately less.

I should like specially to mention that we must not take the daily earnings of a man who can finish 1½ or 2 haziras daily as the average income of a coolie, because though there are such coolies they are to be counted as exceptions, and exceptions should always be avoided in showing the average income.

As an average able-bodied coolie cannot hoe more than 30 by 1 nal of land, he earns 4 annas per diem, i.e., Rs. 6-8 annas per month, which is a little higher than the pay of the old system.

As regards a woman, as only fine plucking is allowed in my garden, a woman gets 9 pies per seer of plucked green leaves. Taking eight seers, which is the average plucking for a woman per day, she earns Rs. 9-12 annas per month. Thus a woman often earns more than an average man in the plucking season.

(iii) Relation to prices and cost of living (pre-war and post-war). The abnormal rise of prices in the bare necessities of life has, however, far counterbalanced the little rise in wages of a coolie family at the present time.

While dealing with this point we must not ignore the expenditure incurred by a coolie in liquor. If a liquor shop remains within his reach, a coolie spends more in liquor than he should and thus leaving only a small fraction of his weekly or fortnightly wages to buy the necessities of life.

I read a report of a witness given before a "Commission" in which he stated that liquor to a coolie meant work. If the gentleman would have spoken honestly he would certainly have stated that liquor to a coolie means his starvation from week to week and the tattered clothes he wears.

The local market day is the payment day for each garden all over Assam. On that day he drinks in the market, and what is more, it is difficult to bring him out of his house on the next day for work for the previous day and night's reaction.

When I and all other managers of the gardens have this bitter experience, I cannot realize what induced the gentleman to state before the "Commission" that liquor to a coolie meant work.

The nearest liquor shop is situated some seven miles off from my Boloma garden and consequently the coolies find little opportunity to spend their wages recklessly in liquor. The coolies here do thus spend the major portion of their earnings in buying the necessities of life.

The Boloma labourers are far better off than my coolies at Boroikata T.E. where the coolies spend most of their income in the liquor shop, which is situated within 1½ miles of the garden. The coolies in Boloma do not trouble me much for advance wages, whereas my Boroikata coolies take too much advance wage.

We must never expect the coolies to be provident until they are given proper education, which is a far remote thing.

Under the prevailing rates of wages in tea gardens, it is my honest conviction that the present wages are quite inadequate for the average coolies to keep their body and mind together. They cannot make any saving either for evil days or for the education of their children.

Single men and couples without children to help them are the greatest sufferers, as no one can help them during their days of absence when no wages are earned.

98. I have never seen a coolie send money to his home. If he can accumulate a little sum he settles in a basti permanently.

99. As most of the shopkeepers give short weight to the ignorant coolies, I give them paddy or rice only from my go-down to last them for a week, the price of which is deducted from their wages.

100. Wages in Boloma garden:—Adult coolie (outdoor) 6 annas per diem; young adult 5 annas per diem; woman 5 annas per diem. Besides, they are engaged in ticca works, when they earn more.

106. (i) A labourer is fined for dishonesty and carelessness, and the fine in each case does not exceed a full day's wage.

(ii) Deductions ranging from 2 annas to 8 annas are made for advances taken or for small loans taken on emergent cases.

107. (i) In my garden, wages are paid weekly, which is a safeguard against their improvidence and short-sightedness in spending recklessly their earnings.

(ii) On every seventh day, wages are paid for the preceding six working days.

(iii) It is essentially necessary to make legislation to pay the coolies weekly, and not fortnightly or monthly. This method should not be left to the discretion of the garden authorities, as I am sorry to state that there are instances of abusing this "discretion".

ASSAM BRANCH, INDIAN TEA ASSOCIATION, DIBRUGARH.

The Assam or Brahmaputra Valley.—This valley consists of the following six districts:—Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. There are few tea gardens in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup, the majority being in the remaining four districts.

The Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association.—This association was formed on the 29th October, 1889, with a membership representing 76,692 acres of tea. The present membership represents 251,277 acres of tea.

There are 641 tea gardens in the Assam Valley, having a total area of 1,021,640 acres, of which 280,139 acres are under tea cultivation.

The Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association, therefore represents over 89½ per cent. of the total under tea in the Assam Valley.

Labour.—The total tea garden population in the Assam Valley living on tea garden land is 701,892, of whom 400,710 are adults and 301,182 are children.

The birth and death-rates per thousand in 1927-28 were 32.41 and 20.61 respectively.

The land held by labourers still on the garden books in the Assam Valley amounts to 109,791 acres, of which 89,963 acres are held as tenants of the garden at a revenue of Rs. 89,917-9-6, equivalent to 15 annas 11 pies per acre, as compared with the revenue of Rs. 2-4-10 per acre charged by government and Rs. 6-6 annas per acre charged by other landlords.

Apart from the above area the land settled with ex-tea garden coolies by government in the Assam Valley amounts to 316,207 acres.

From a census taken from 107 typical gardens in the Assam Valley with a total adult Labour Force of 99,102, it appears the coolies owned 5,335 buffaloes and 63,936 cattle.

Production and Prices of Tea.—The average out-turn per acre in 1926 was 602 lbs., in 1927, 556 lbs., and in 1928, 609 lbs. The quality and prices vary considerably throughout the Assam Valley owing to soil, climatic conditions and age of the tea.

At the present moment prices have relapsed and are likely to continue to do so, with the result that many concerns are now selling at under cost price.

Major S. L. MITRA, D.P.H., I.M.S., Officiating Director of Public Health, Assam.

The Director of Public Health has no contact with tea gardens. Information as far as available is given below:—

IV.—Health.

23. *General Health Conditions of Workers.*—Tea gardens are the chief industrial concerns in Assam. Registration of births and deaths is compulsory in tea gardens under the Assam Labour and Emigration Act VI of 1901. The population of tea gardens according to the census of 1921 was 915,480. Tea garden managers maintain registers of births and deaths and submit a monthly return to the district civil surgeons through the Deputy Commissioner or Subdivisional Officer. The Civil Surgeons include tea garden returns in their district monthly returns of vital statistics which are submitted to the Director of Public Health.

The following statement shows deaths and death-rates from the various diseases registered in tea gardens during 1926, 1927 and 1928:—

Registration of Vital Statistics in Tea Gardens.

| Years. | Deaths registered. | | | | | | Total mortality. | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------------------|------------|---------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|-------|------|-------|-------|------|--------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| | Cholera. | Small-pox. | Plague. | Fevers, including <i>Kala azar</i> . | <i>Kala azar</i> . | Dysentery and diarrhoea. | Injuries, including suicide. | Other causes. | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1926 | 449 | .49 | 128 | .14 | — | 3,217 | 3.51 | 3,168 | 3.46 | 217 | .23 | 6,599 | 7.21 | 16,998 | 18.57 | | | |
| 1927 | 669 | .73 | 95 | .10 | — | 2,640 | 2.88 | 124 | 3.131 | 3.42 | 3,429 | 3.74 | 169 | .18 | 6,447 | 7.04 | 16,580 | 18.11 |
| 1928 | 381 | .42 | 73 | .08 | — | 2,967 | 3.24 | 93 | 2,863 | 3.13 | 3,522 | 3.85 | 162 | .18 | 6,516 | 7.12 | 16,484 | 18.01 |

For the purpose of comparison provincial deaths and death-rates from the various diseases for the years 1926, 1927 and 1928 are given below:—

Registration of Vital Statistics among General Population.

| Years. | Deaths registered. | | | | | | Total mortality. | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|--------------------|------------|---------|---|---------------|--------------------------------|------------------|-------|--------|------|-------|-----|-------|-----|--------|------|---------|-------|
| | Cholera. | Small-pox. | Plague. | Fever, including <i>hala azar</i> . | Kala azar. | Dysentery and diarrhoea. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1926 | 10,275 | 1.49 | 4,840 | .70 | — | 93,689 | 13.67 | 4,176 | 9,787 | 1.43 | 5,300 | .77 | 1,941 | .28 | 31,955 | 4.66 | 157,787 | 23.02 |
| 1927 | 15,382 | 2.24 | 5,237 | .76 | — | 89,324 | 13.03 | 2,859 | 10,469 | 1.52 | 5,658 | .82 | 1,871 | .27 | 32,862 | 4.79 | 160,813 | 23.47 |
| 1928 | 6,915 | 1.01 | 8,461 | 1.23 | — | 89,255 | 13.03 | 1,660 | 8,501 | 1.24 | 5,615 | .82 | 1,821 | .27 | 31,289 | 4.57 | 151,857 | 22.16 |

It will be observed from the above statements that the total death-rates in tea gardens is much lower than that among the general population.

The following statement shows birth-rates and infant mortality rates in tea gardens and in the province of Assam in 1926, 1927 and 1928 :—

| — | Tea gardens. | | Province of Assam. | |
|------------|--------------|---|--------------------|---|
| | Birth-rate. | Infant mortality rate per 1,000 births. | Birth-rate. | Infant mortality rate per 1,000 births. |
| 1926 | 29.58 | 105.06 | 30.82 | 181.94 |
| 1927 | 28.78 | 93.80 | 30.25 | 171.35 |
| 1928 | 28.11 | 94.08 | 31.24 | 172.01 |

The above figures show that the birth-rate being nearly equal, the infant mortality rate is much less in the tea gardens than in the province of Assam generally.

26. Information and advice are given by the Provincial Public Health Department to tea garden managers and their medical officers as to the suitable form of latrines such as septic tanks, aqua privies and pit privies which the gardens might find suitable to instal. The department also give advice in regard to preparation of suitable water-supply schemes.

The water-supply is generally derived from wells and streams and in some cases it is distributed by pipes to the coolie lines.

An adequate supply of water for bathing and washing for the labourers is provided.

Every agent or person appointed by him to accompany emigrants to the destination provides emigrants travelling by train two meals to which they are accustomed. Purest drinking water obtainable is supplied to them in a drum placed in the carriage. The supply is at least one quart for each emigrant and dependant.

Emigrants and dependants are accommodated in third-class carriages especially reserved for them and the number in each carriage does not exceed the regulation number.

At certain stations the trains are met by medical officers to see if the above sanitary provisions are complied with.

They pass through the depots established at suitable places, e.g., Naihati, Goalundo, Gauhati and Tezpur, where they are treated for minor ailments and segregated for infectious diseases.

An emigrant suffering from leprosy is not allowed to proceed to a garden without the approval of the Director of Public Health, Assam. Such permission is not generally granted and the managers are advised to put the patient under treatment in one of the leprosy centres. Emigrants suffering from conjunctivitis are detained in recruiting depot before being despatched to the gardens.

29. The chief prevailing diseases in tea gardens are dysentery, diarrhoea and malaria. *Kala asar* is also prevalent in certain gardens.

The extensive improvements of conservancy arrangements in the coolie lines by the provision of septic tank latrines, aqua privies and various types of pit latrines have of late years materially reduced the mortality from dysentery and diarrhoea. The difficulty which lies in inducing the primitive aboriginal people who form the bulk of the labourers on tea estates to conform to the custom associated with a conservancy system is being gradually overcome.

Anti-malarial schemes have been adopted in some of the important gardens. An expert of the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine has studied the condition responsible for the prevalence of malaria in tea gardens and has submitted a report. The garden authorities are fully alive to the extreme necessity for bringing all cases of *kala asar* under treatment and thereby remove the infection. Tea gardens are provided with urea stibamine at wholesale concession rates, in precisely the same manner as the Public Health Department of the province.

Tea gardens employ fully qualified medical officers and well equipped hospitals are provided in which the sick are treated and infectious cases are isolated.

When a garden is declared as unhealthy it is inspected by the civil surgeon and the report is shown to the Director of Public Health.

Intimation of the occurrence of an epidemic disease in villages in the neighbourhood of a tea garden is immediately given to the garden medical officer. Similarly, when an epidemic disease prevails in a garden, it is promptly communicated to the District Civil Surgeon.

MR. F. C. KING, I.C.S., CHAIRMAN ASSAM LABOUR BOARD.

INTRODUCTION.

In this memorandum I have confined myself to those heads of enquiry which have a direct bearing on the subject of recruitment to Assam. Though I have had some opportunities during my tours in Assam, of observing the conditions of employment on the tea gardens, I have refrained from discussing those items in the schedule of subjects which deal with the labour conditions in Assam as I consider these matters are better dealt with by experts who can speak from long and familiar experience than by a casual visitor. In view, however, of the stress I have laid in my note on the lavish expenditure incurred in recruitment, which might, with advantage, have been diverted to an increase of wages, it is only fair to the employer to record my impression that, as a class, tea garden managers have shown themselves very zealous for the health and welfare of their labour forces. All through Assam one finds well-equipped hospitals and improved housing conditions, often in the form of model *bastis*, with an up-to-date water-supply and plots of homestead land for each house. The system of discipline under which the labourer lives is not a strict one. He is free to work or to idle as he chooses, but work is always available for him when he chooses to work. In many gardens arrangements are made for the care and feeding of small children when the mother is absent at her work, and orphan children are looked after till they grow old enough to earn their living. Pregnancy leave on full or half pay is allowed to women for a period of three to six months before and after child-birth. Anti-malarial measures are adopted, often at very considerable cost, and conservancy and sanitary services also receive attention in some localities. Add to this the fact that in many cases the labourer gets rice-fields of his own from the garden, or can take settlement of a farm from Government, and it will not occasion surprise to find that the labour force is on the whole well off happy and contented. There is no doubt that the abolition of penal contracts under Act VI of 1901, and the repeal of the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act, and of Sections 490 and 492 of the Indian Penal Code have had much to do with the improvement of the coolie's position by leaving him free to seek the best market for his labour and by giving an added stimulus to the employer's efforts to retain his services by the offer of better conditions and of employment. The abolition of restrictive labour rules, which is now under contemplation by the tea industry, will contribute further to the progress of the coolie. If to this could be added the diversion of a considerable proportion of the high cost of recruitment into the labourer's wages bill, the lot of the Assam labourer would be hard to beat. Now that the last restrictions on the free movement of labour in Assam are being discarded, the time seems to be appropriate for such a development.

1. *Origin of Labour.*—(i) The labour employed in the Assam tea gardens is unskilled, agricultural labour. Aboriginal labourers make the best settlers in a jungly and mountainous country such as Assam is, and consequently they are most sought after by employers. Mundas, Uraons and Kharias from Chota-Nagpur, Santals from the Santal Parganas, Sawras, Parjas and Godubas from the agency tracts of Ganjam and Vizagapatam, Khonds and Gandas from Orissa and Gonds from the central provinces are the pick of the Assam labour force from the tea planter's point of view. These tribes do not, however, supply sufficient labour to go round, so lower caste Hindus and a few Muhammadans from Bihar and Orissa, the central provinces and the united provinces, Bengal, Bombay and Madras have to be recruited to make good the deficiency.

(ii) The chief causes of emigration to Assam are (a) Increase of population and consequent pressure on the soil. Junior members of families go out to earn when the ancestral holding becomes insufficient to support all. The choice of Assam in preference to other fields of labour is often determined by the fact that emigrants have friends or relatives who may have obtained land and settled down there. (b) Indebtedness is another great stimulant to emigration. (c) Other causes which sometimes operate are love of travel and change, domestic disagreements, hopes of obtaining lucrative employment as sardars, famine, etc.

(iii) *Changes in recent years.*—On 5th September, 1923, the whole of the Madras Presidency was thrown open to recruitment for Assam under certain conditions. Since 1919 a system of regularised recruitment has been carried on from the following Feudatory states in accordance with a set of rules called the "Model Rules" framed for the purpose in consultation with the Bihar and Orissa Government and approved by the Government of India: Athgarh, Athmalik, Baud, Beramba, Daspalla, Dhenkanal, Gangpore, Hindol, Khandpara, Kharwan, Keonjhar, Mourbhanj, Narsingpur, Nayagarh, Nilgiri, Pal-Lahera, Patna, Rairakhol, Seraikella, Sonpur, Tigiria and Jashpur.

Recruitment of labour for the Assam tea estates from Bastar State was prohibited with effect from the 5th December, 1924.

2. *Contact with Villages.*—(i) *Extent and frequency of return.*—Home leave, as such, is not ordinarily given to labourers on Assam tea gardens during the period of their employment, but contact is maintained with their home districts through the sardari system, under which a number of labourers is deputed to the recruiting districts each year to recruit fresh labour. These labourers sent down to recruit are called sardars. They are, as a rule, sent to their home districts and spend ordinarily three or four months there before returning to the gardens. On an average, 41,500 sardars are sent to the recruiting districts each year.

Recently a system of short-term recruitment for the tea gardens has sprung up and has proved remarkably successful in Ranchi district. The period of engagement under this system is six months, nine months, one year and sometimes two years.

(ii) *Extent of the permanent labour force.*—It is computed that there are 1,025,221 labourers on the books of tea garden managers in Assam. About four per cent. of these are deputed to the recruiting districts as sardars each year.

3. *Methods of Recruitment.*—(i) *Existing methods.*—Recruitment for Assam is, at present, confined to what is known as the sardari system. A "garden sardar" is defined as "a person employed on an estate and deputed by his employer to engage labourers." The definition is very wide, but, in theory, the sardari system is supposed to be a system of recruitment of labourers by *bona fide* labourers who know the conditions of employment thoroughly and who have been deputed to their home districts to explain the advantages of employment on their garden to their relatives, friends and acquaintances and to recruit those who are willing to emigrate.

(ii) *Possible improvements.*—The sardari system of recruitment is a very restricted form of securing labour, though, in theory at least, it is a very safe one for the labourer. The theory has been explained in the previous paragraph. In actual practice this theory is breaking down. Advantage is being taken of the comprehensive nature of the definition of garden sardar to employ, in increasing numbers, recruiters who cannot conform to the best traditions of sardari recruitment. The scarcity of labour has forced employers to strain the true sardari system by employing unsuitable recruiters, often not genuine labourers, as sardars, and the high commission paid by managers has brought into existence a plentiful supply of petty professional recruiters in the guise of garden sardars. The situation is well summed up in the tour notes of a former chairman of the Assam Labour Board, Mr. Mills, who, from his experience as an Assam Deputy Commissioner and as Chairman of the Assam Labour Board, knows the recruiting problem from both ends. He says:—

"Among the many points which were discussed on the gardens, there are two in particular which I should like to bring to the notice of members: Could not another effort be made to arrive at uniformity, and reduction of the commission paid to sardars? This question has been raised before but with little effect. Not only does the present system of high bonuses increase cost of recruiting but it gives rise to abuses. It is only too common to come across sardars who are merely professional recruiters. These men draw large sums as commission, and as a rule, recruit very inferior coolies. It is far from uncommon for a man of this type to abscond with all his coolies as soon as he draws his commission and to recruit them again for some other garden and again draw commission. Even where a man is not a professional recruiter when he joins the garden, high commission tends to make him into one. A man who may have been a *bona fide* labourer but who has been lucky in recruiting and has drawn a few hundred rupees in commission naturally looks with scorn on hoeing, and feels that recruiting is his vocation in life. So the professionals increase and flourish, and it would perhaps not be far from the truth to say that whereas in the old days coolies were bought from *arkatis*, managers in many cases now are buying them from their own sardars. This is not real sardari recruiting. The reduced commission would disgust the professional, but I cannot see that a *bona fide* sardar would require very large monetary inducements to go down and bring up his own connections; and these make the best coolies."

In my inspections of local agencies, I very frequently find instances of garden sardars being sent down to recruit after spending a few days on the garden. Such

men are obviously professional recruiters and not genuine labourers. Not infrequently they are sent to districts other than their home districts. When I inspected Cawnpore agency I found that all the sardars were non-district sardars, i.e., they belonged to districts other than the district in which they were recruiting. In inspecting Basti local agency I found that a very large percentage of the recruitment was reported to have taken place at the railway station.

The break-down of the sardari system shows that it is inadequate to the needs of the industry. Employers are debarred from working through licensed contractors, so they are forced to employ inferior professional recruiters who have gone through the form of being recruited and sent up to Assam as labourers. In addition to being an inferior method of recruitment, this is an unnecessarily expensive one, as the recruiter has first to be brought up as a labourer and then his railway fares and expenses have to be paid to and from the garden, merely to comply with a legal formula which does not protect the recruit. That the system has not led to serious abuses is due, partly to the determination of the Tea Districts Labour Association to insist on clean recruitment, partly to the adequacy of the supervision maintained by the Assam Labour Board, and partly to the fact that professional recruiters of a low type have not as yet been employed to any great extent in the principal recruiting fields, such as Chota Nagpur.

What is needed is a more elastic system of recruitment which will admit other agencies than the garden sardar. It is in this direction that improvement should be sought. The subject is further discussed in paragraph 6.

(iii) *Public employment agencies.*—Public employment agencies have not yet been tried in India, and their suitability for Assam recruitment must be largely a matter for speculation. There is, however, one characteristic of Indian labour, viz., its great mobility which should tend to the success of employment agencies, if established. Labour, which would move through public employment agencies, would have a choice of fields of employment and would naturally select the more attractive. Accordingly, if Assam were to recruit through public employment agencies, it would have to rely on the attractions afforded by the conditions of employment offered, rather than on commissions to recruiters and other such adventitious aid to emigration. In the case of the Assam tea industry, which has been accustomed to spend money freely on the recruitment of its labour, considerable difficulties in the working of public employment agencies might arise from the competition of employers amongst themselves, but it should not be impossible to overcome these difficulties. It certainly would be for the benefit of the industry if a system of well-supervised public employment agencies could contribute to the solution of the Assam labour problem. It would greatly cheapen the cost of securing labour and would at the same time be a help and a safeguard to the labourer. On the other hand, in the absence of any experience of how they would work, public employment agencies could only be regarded as an experiment, and nothing would justify the staking of the supply of labour to an important industry like tea on the chances of such an experiment proving successful. At most, the experiment should only be tried in one or two selected centres as a test.

4. The disturbance to family life in the recruiting districts caused by Assam emigration is, I believe, negligible, owing to the care exercised in accepting recruits, especially minors and single females. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the conditions in Assam to express an opinion regarding the effects caused in the labour districts.

6. *Recruitment for Assam.*—(i) *Need of retention of control.*—The Assam tea industry is the only industry which is controlled in its recruitment of Indian labour. Other industries, and even the tea industry in the Dooars, Darjeeling and Madras Presidency, are free from governmental control. There are some who advocate that the Assam tea industry should also be free, but up to now the Indian Tea Association has not accepted this view; on the contrary, it has definitely urged that government control is necessary. The local governments have also insisted on the necessity of maintaining some form of control. The advocates of control fear that if recruiting were free, abuses would arise as they did in the past from the competitive spending of money to secure labour. I have no doubt that the unrestricted spending of money with the object of securing labour under a system of free recruitment would, in the absence of very efficient control, very quickly revive all the abuses which were associated with the *arkati* system of recruitment. If free recruitment is to be inevitably associated with lavish and uncontrolled expenditure on recruitment, then there can be no doubt that the continuance of control is essential. The labourer gets no advantage from the large sums spent on his recruitment. On the contrary, the greater the amount expended in securing his emigration, the less happy is likely to be his lot. Recruitment expenses swell the labour bill, and it may be assumed that, as no firm can afford to expend an indefinite amount on labour, high recruiting

expenses injuriously affect the wages and other conditions of employment. Furthermore, the large amount spent on the importation of labourers did in the past engender a tendency on the part of employers in Assam to restrict their free movement in the labour market.

Apart from abuses in recruitment which might arise from the competitive spending of money to secure recruits, another circumstance which differentiates the Assam tea industry from other industries is the great length and expense of the journey from the recruiting fields to Assam. Thousands of labourers are brought to Assam each year from far Bombay and Madras and from distant districts in the central and united provinces. Other industries draw their labour forces from regions much closer at hand and, consequently, the journey to and from their homes is neither so arduous nor so expensive as in the case of immigrants to Assam. The cost to a tea garden coolie of a journey from Assam to his home district would, in a very large proportion of cases, exceed the cost of repatriating an Indian coolie working in Malay or Ceylon. The remoteness of Assam from the recruiting fields has always been considered one of the justifications for retaining control over emigration to that province. Though communications with Assam have greatly improved since the passing of Act VI of 1901 there has, I think, been little, if any, decrease in the cost of a journey there from the recruiting districts.

(ii) *Administration of the present system.*—The present system of recruiting is controlled by Act VI of 1901, called the Assam Labour and Emigration Act, 1901, as amended by Act XI of 1908, Act VIII of 1915, Act XI of 1915, Act XXXVIII of 1920 (Devolution Act) and Act XXXI of 1927. The Act extends to the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, United Provinces, Central Provinces, Madras and Assam. The most notable innovation effected by the provisions of Act VIII of 1915 is the abolition of the system of recruitment by contractors and their recruiters, commonly known as *arkatis*. In all recruiting areas, therefore, in which the provisions of Act VI of 1901 are in operation, save and except the local areas in which recruitment has been prohibited by notification under Section 3, recruitment is carried out only through the medium of garden sardars, under the provisions of Chapter IV, working under a local agent duly licensed under Section 64 of the Act. The only recruiter now recognised is the sardar who must himself engage the coolies. Any arrangement for the direct supply of coolies to a tea estate by a contractor or for the supply to sardars of coolies, collected through the agency of a contractor or *arkati*, would be illegal and would render every person who is a party to such an arrangement liable to prosecution and punishment under Section 164 of the Act. Even an employer cannot himself legally engage labour in a recruiting district; he must do so through the agency of his garden sardars.

Act VI of 1901 is not in force in the native states, but, by the addition of an explanation to clause (e) of Section 2 (1) of Act VI of 1901, the recruitment of coolies from the native states has been brought within the provisions of the Act, once they leave the native state and enter a British recruiting district. The practical effect of this amendment is that a coolie, who has been engaged in a native state, must, once he enters a British recruiting district, be assisted to emigrate therefrom by a certified garden sardar, and that such coolie cannot be assisted to emigrate from such British district except under the provisions of Act VI of 1901, or of any rule or order issued thereunder relating to recruitment by garden sardars.

Procedure regarding Grant of Certificates to Garden Sardars.—Under Section 56 (1) an employer can grant to any garden sardar a certificate authorising him, in such local area within the limits of a single recruiting district as may be specified in the certificate, to engage persons desirous of becoming labourers upon any estate of which the employer is in charge, and may cancel such certificate at any time. This certificate is to be accepted and signed by the garden sardar in the presence of the Inspector or of a Magistrate having jurisdiction over the place where the employer granting the certificate resides. Under Section 59 the Inspector or Magistrate, after being satisfied of the truth of the facts stated in the certificate, and also that the sardar is a fit person to hold a certificate, countersigns and dates the certificate. For any breach of any of the provisions of the Act or rules thereunder, this certificate may at any time be cancelled by any Inspector or Magistrate who countersigned it, or by the District Magistrate who countersigned the certificate under Section 61, or by the Superintendent of Emigration within whose jurisdiction the garden sardar is employed. The duration of this certificate is for a period not longer than one year from the date of its countersignature.

Local Agents.—The procedure for the grant of licences to local agents is given below:—

(i) The Local Government may authorize any Superintendent to grant licences to suitable persons to represent employers within a specified area and for a specified period, in all matters connected with the supervision of garden sardars under the Act.

All District Magistrates and Deputy Commissioners are authorised to grant licences to local agents under the provisions of Section 64 of the Act in their capacity as Superintendents of Emigration.

(ii) Any employer, or on behalf of an employer, any association or firm duly authorized by general or special order of the Governor-General in Council for the purpose of this clause, may apply for a license as aforesaid, to be granted to a specified person.

(iii) Every such application shall be made to the Board, and the Board shall forward it with its recommendation to the Superintendent, who may thereupon, if he thinks fit, grant a license to such person.

Cancellation of Licences of Local Agents.—Section 67 (i). The District Magistrate of any district within which a local agent acts as such, may, by order in writing, cancel the licence of the local agent if his employer or the association or firm which has applied in respect of such local agent under Section 64, sub-section (ii), so requires, or if the District Magistrate is satisfied that the conduct of the local agent has been such as to render him unsuitable to hold a licence.

67 (ii). The local agent may, within three months next after the date of any order of a District Magistrate cancelling his license under sub-section (i), appeal against the order to the Local Government, and the decision of the Local Government thereon shall be final.

Over 90 per cent. of recruitment for Assam is done by the Tea Districts Labour Association who have appointed local agents, under whom garden sardars work, in the different recruiting districts. Besides the Tea Districts Labour Association, there are four outside local agents, three in Ranchi and one in the Santal Parganas. The procedure to be adopted by garden sardars and local agents is given in the notifications issued by the different Local Governments, which are almost on the same lines. The conditions to be observed are quoted below :—

(i) The Association shall employ a local agent in each recruiting district or such larger area as may be prescribed by the Local Government in which garden sardars are employed under its control for the purpose of representing the Association in all matters connected with the supervision of such sardars.

(ii) Every local agent shall provide sufficient and proper accommodation in a suitable place for emigrants or intending emigrants engaged or assisted and their dependants, pending their removal to a labour district, and the provisions of clauses (ii) to (iv) of Section 62 shall apply to such accommodation.

(iii) Every local agent shall keep two registers, the one containing the names and descriptions of all garden sardars working under his control, and the other the names and descriptions of all emigrants or intending emigrants engaged or assisted by such sardars, together with the names and descriptions of the dependants, of all persons so engaged by the sardars. The said registers shall be open to inspection at any time by any Magistrate or any police officer above the rank of sub-Inspector, before the emigrants or the intending emigrants are despatched to the labour district. The local agent shall submit to the District Magistrate a copy of the entries in the second register, with the certificate in the form prescribed for the register.

(iv) Any local agent shall, if so required by a Magistrate or by a police officer above the rank of sub-Inspector, produce before such Magistrate or police officer any person engaged or assisted by a garden sardar working under the local agent's control, or any dependant of any person so engaged or assisted who is in a place of accommodation provided under clause (ii).

(v) Every local agent shall report for the orders of the Magistrate any case in which objection is made to the emigration of any person by any one claiming to stand in the relation of husband, wife, parent or lawful guardian of the emigrant or the intending emigrant.

(vi) If so required by an order in writing of the District Magistrate, the local agent shall not, until after the lapse of three clear days, remove or allow to be removed from the district or area any woman who is to proceed to a labour district unaccompanied by her husband or lawful guardian.

(vii) Every local agent shall satisfy himself that the names and addresses given by the garden sardars and by the persons engaged or assisted by them are correct and that the wages and other conditions of service are fully explained to and understood by the person so engaged or assisted.

(viii) Every garden sardar shall be bound to give the local agent to whom he is accredited a true account of every person engaged or assisted by the garden sardars under him, and to correct any mis-description of any such person given by that person which the sardar knows to be untrue or inaccurate.

(ix) Every local agent shall be responsible for preventing to the best of his ability all misconduct on the part of the sardars accredited to him and for bringing all illegal acts committed by them to the notice of the District Magistrate.

(x) The licence of any local agent who may be found not to have exercised due care in preventing misconduct on the part of the sardars accredited to him or to have failed to report any illegal act committed by any such sardar shall be liable to be cancelled by the District Magistrate of any district within which the local agent acts as such.

Medical.—All emigrants are registered by the local agent, and in most local agencies there are arrangements for the medical examination of coolies. Anyone found medically unfit to undertake the journey to the labour districts, or any labourer found incapacitated by reason of any obvious bodily defect or infirmity for labour in the labour district is not allowed to proceed. The Tea Districts Labour Association maintains a separate medical staff, dispensary and hospital at each of the principal agencies where sardars, coolies and relatives accompanying them are treated free of charge.

Clothing.—Clothing outfits in accordance with the following scale are given to the abourers and their dependants :—

Adults (aged 12 and over)—1 *dhuti* or *sari*, 2 blankets, 1 brass *lota*, 1 brass *thali*

Children (4 to 11 years inclusive)—1 *dhuti*, 1 coat, 1 blanket, 1 brass cup.

Infants (below 4 years)—1 *banian*, 1 cotton *kurta*.

During the summer months (i.e., April to September inclusive) one blanket only is issued to adult emigrants.

Forwarding.—There are forwarding agencies of the Tea Districts Labour Association at the following places through which coolies pass on their way to Assam :—

(1) Goalundo ; (2) Gauhati ; (3) Amingaon ; (4) Naihati ; (5) Khargpur ; (6) Asanol ; (7) Chandpur ; (8) Purulia ; (9) Vizianagram ; (10) Lalmonirhat (11) Santahar.

There are feeding arrangements at each of the forwarding agencies. Coolies to Assam valley pass through Rangiya and Gauhati and also by steamer *via* Goalundo, and those to Surma valley pass through Goalundo and Chandpur. Emigrants are embarked as soon as possible after their arrival, and at every embarkation the embarkation agent or his assistant is required to supervise the embarkation as laid down in rule 70 of the rules relating to the transit of emigrants prescribed under Section 163 of the Act. If any emigrant is taken ill and is unfit to continue his journey, he is detained and sent to the authorised hospital. Besides the Tea Districts Labour Association, there are forwarding agencies of Messrs. Medland Bose and Company, at Naihati and Purulia, but the work of these two agencies is inconsiderable.

Inspection of Agencies.—Agencies are inspected by Magistrates, Superintendents of Emigration, Civil Surgeons, the Supervisors and the Chairman of the Assam Labour Board.

Cess.—Under section 116E, cess is levied by the Assam Labour Board on employers for the purpose of meeting expenditure incurred in carrying out its functions under the Act, and in particular for the payment of the salary of the supervisors, and of such portion of the salary of the Chairman as may be determined under Section 116B. Such cess is payable on every person deputed by an employer to engage or assist persons to emigrate and on every person assisted to emigrate to a labour district. The present rate of cess is Re. 1-8 annas on each sardar and emigrant.

Repatriation.—Sections 12, 13, 84, 89, 159, 161 and 162 provide for repatriation of persons wrongfully recruited or physically incapacitated.

(iii) *Composition and Working of the Assam Labour Board.*—This Board has been constituted under Section 5, Act VIII of 1915, "for the supervision of local agents and of the recruitment, engagement and emigration to labour districts of natives of India." It consists of 16 members, including the Chairman, who is a Government officer appointed by the Governor-General in Council. The remaining officers are elected by the following bodies :—

(a) 8 by the Indian Tea Association, Calcutta, as representatives of that Association and of the Indian Tea Association, London ; (b) 4 by the Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association ; and (c) 3 by the Surma valley branch, Indian Tea Association.

There is an Executive Committee of the Board, consisting of 5 members, of whom one is the Chairman of the Board and the remaining 4 are elected as follows :—

(a) 1 by the Indian Tea Association, Calcutta ; (b) 1 by the Indian Tea Association, London ; (c) 1 by the Assam branch, Indian Tea Association ; and (d) 1 by the Surma valley branch, Indian Tea Association.

Three supervisors are employed by the Board, and these supervisors, as well as the Chairman, tour freely throughout the recruiting districts. All local agencies engaged in recruitment are inspected by these officers, who look to the reporting of offences and the general observance of the Act by local agents and sardars, and, when necessary, advise District Officers on matters connected with the administration of the Act.

As the Board consists chiefly of representatives of the tea industry, it is a means by which the industry is associated with Government in the administration of the Act and, as such, it has proved valuable in removing abuses previously connected with recruitment.

(iv) *Defects of existing Act and system.*—The chief defect of the existing Act is that it was passed to regulate a system of recruitment entirely different from the system now in vogue. Recruitment by contractors, sub-contractors and recruiters has been abolished, and all other forms of recruitment, except recruitment by certified garden sardars working under the supervision of licensed local agents, have been prohibited. Registration of coolies by Government officers has been abandoned, and labour contracts, together with the penal provisions for their enforcement, have been done away with. These changes have entirely altered the character of recruitment for Assam and the consequential changes in the Act have completely altered the Act itself. A fundamental consequence of the abolition of labour contracts and Government registration of emigrants is that the definition of "labourer" contained in the Act ceases to have any application. The repeals and alterations of the Act have, therefore, resulted in the peculiar position that an Act designed to regulate the emigration and conditions of employment of labourers has no application whatever to labourers, as defined in the Act. At the present moment, recruitment is regulated almost entirely by rules promulgated by notifications of the provincial Governments under Sections 3 and 91 of the Act, read in conjunction with the penal Sections 164 and 174. The system works simply because the tea industry endeavours to make it work. An overwhelming proportion of recruitment for Assam is conducted by the Tea Districts Labour Association, and it is the policy of this Association which represents the great bulk of the tea industry to carry out the system of legal control imposed by Government. Other minor recruiting agencies which are in existence also follow the same policy. Should the present system of control ever be seriously challenged, I am convinced that it would prove unworkable.

Though the tea industry submits to the present system of control, it cannot be said that it is satisfied with it or that the system is a good one. The restriction of recruitment to certified garden sardars imposes a serious handicap on the industry and renders recruitment unnecessarily expensive. On an average, each sardar recruits one coolie. In Ceylon and Malay, I understand that each recruiter secures, on the average, six to nine recruits respectively. The evils of the present Assam system in this respect have been aggravated by the strict interpretation which has been placed by the Courts, in at least one province, on the word "assist" in section 164 of the Emigration Act. Under this interpretation it is unlawful, for instance, for a missionary who is approached voluntarily by members of his congregation who desire to emigrate to Assam, to send them to a certified sardar or a licensed local agent for the purpose. It has also been held that general propaganda by Tea Districts Labour Association local agents setting forth the conditions of employment in Assam is inadmissible under the Act, inasmuch as it would constitute illegal assistance to recruitment.

A further instance of the rigidity and unsuitability of the present Act is found in the fact that it contains no provision whereby an emigrant who comes in of his own accord to a local agent with a view to emigration to Assam can be forwarded. The difficulty is at present overcome by the expensive method of getting a sardar sent down from the garden in Assam to which the coolie wishes to proceed, but even this course is open to objection, as at any time it may be held that the local agent is guilty of illegal assistance to recruitment in putting the sardar in touch with the recruit.

It is unnecessary to dwell at length on technical defects, of which the Act is full. Enough has been said to show that the Act is unworkable.

The system of recruitment for Assam which has grown up under Act VI of 1901 is almost as defective as the Act itself. Recruitment is almost entirely under the control of the Tea Districts Labour Association which may be regarded as the recruiting department of the Indian Tea Association. So complete is the monopoly of the Tea Districts Labour Association that it is impossible for any employer, except in a few privileged cases, to recruit labour legally except through the Tea Districts Labour Association.

The most prominent defects in the present system of recruitment are:—(a) that it is a very expensive system; (b) that it does nothing to promote the free flow of labour to Assam; (c) that it is a monopolistic system.

I will consider each of these aspects of the system in turn. (a) It is difficult to ascertain exactly what the average cost of recruiting a labourer is, as I have not access to accounts which would show the cost. The impression I have derived from conversations with managers is that the average cost ranges from Rs. 150 to Rs. 200 a head. In exceptional cases, the cost of recruiting a labourer may run well into four figures. The Indian Tea Association, in a pamphlet prepared for the United Provinces Government which was printed in 1926, estimated the average cost of recruiting a labourer as *not less than* Rs. 150. An estimate of the normal cost of recruiting a labourer from Ganjam agency, one of the nearest of the recruiting agencies to Lakhimpur district, is given as an appendix to this note, and it will be seen that the cost works out at Rs. 190-8 for a single coolie. It has been assumed that one sardar recruits one labourer, which is the normal average. The chief items which enter into to the cost of recruitment are:—(i) Tea Districts Labour Association commission and capitation charges and membership subscriptions ; (ii) forwarding charges, clothing and equipment, and bonus for labourers ; (iii) forwarding charges to and fro and feeding expenses for sardars ; (iv) salaries to recruiting supervisors outside the Tea Districts Labour Association, employed by various companies which recruit through the Tea Districts Labour Association ; (v) Assam Labour Board cess of Re. 1-8 on each emigrant and each sardar ; (vi) advances to sardars in the recruiting districts ; (vii) recruiting commissions to sardars paid in the gardens.

(i), (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v) are fixed and easily known quantities. Attempts have also been made from 1916 onwards to control the advances which are paid to sardars in the recruiting districts.

An annual return showing the average advance paid to sardars by local agents is published as an appendix to the Assam Labour Board report. It will be noticed from these returns that there has been a sharp decline in the scale of advances from 1926 when a very high average was reached. In that year we find average advances for each coolie recruited as high as Rs. 209 in Hazaribagh agency and Rs. 228 in Chhindwara agency. Since then there has been a great improvement, but the average is still considerably higher than in the season 1920-21 after which the rise began.

There is no hard and fast rule regarding the recovery of advances paid to sardars in the recruiting districts. Ordinarily, they are treated as a debt (rarely recovered) if the sardar does not return to his garden, but in the majority of cases when the sardar returns to the garden they are set off against the cost of maintaining the sardar on a scale allowing for a certain amount of display to impress possible emigrants and incidental expenses, such as hospitality, etc., during the time he spends in the recruiting districts. In most gardens recruiting commissions to sardars are in addition to the advances they receive from local agents.

It is not possible to say how much commission is paid for each recruit brought in. The amount varies from company to company, and may vary even under a single company according to circumstances. It is not possible for the Indian Tea Association or the Tea Districts Labour Association to enforce a limit on such commissions, which are paid in the privacy of a garden manager's office. All that can be done is for the various agency houses to come to a voluntary working agreement not to spoil the market by the payment of unnecessarily high commissions. There is a certain measure of agreement in this direction, and, normally, commissions vary from Rs. 20 to Rs. 30 for each recruit with a slightly higher commission when married couples are recruited. I have, however, reason to believe that in certain cases higher commissions ranging to Rs. 50 and Rs. 60 for each recruit are being paid. Presumably, the rate of commission depends on the need of the garden for labour. The minimum commission for Assam is, however, so far as I know, Rs. 20, without recovery of advances paid in the recruiting districts.

The high cost of recruitment under the Tea Districts Labour Association system might, with advantage, be compared with the cost under the Ceylon and Malay systems. Under the Ceylon system the average cost of recruitment of an Indian labourer worked out at Rs. 20.77 from 1923 to 1927. This sum covered cost of transport, quarantine detention, feeding and housing of labourers *en route*, recruiting Kanganes' expenses, repatriation charges of the sick and disabled, cost of protecting and inspecting all Indian estate labourers in Ceylon, etc. (*vide* paragraph 29, Report of Controller of Indian Immigrant Labour for 1928). Under the Malay system, the average cost of importing an Indian labourer, *free of all debt*, works out at \$38, i.e., under Rs. 60, at the present rate of exchange. This figure, like the Ceylon figure, includes a large number of services. Under the Malay system the recruiters' commission is limited to Rs. 10 a head. Under the Ceylon system Rs. 10 is allowed for recruiters' expenses, i.e., this amount is refunded to the employer from the Immigration fund for each labourer recruited, and it is meant to cover the recruiters' expenses. Both the Ceylon and the Malay systems have provided an abundant flow of labour to these colonies, where there was formerly a pressing scarcity, and, at the same time, they have effected an immense reduction in the cost of recruitment.

The salient feature which differentiates both these systems from the Assam system is that the importation of labour is a charge upon the general body of employers and not a matter for the individual employer alone, as in the Assam system. Every employer who employs Indian labour is required to contribute, on a fixed basis of assessment, to an Immigration fund instituted to meet the various expenses connected with the recruitment of a labour force. The recruitment of labourers remains an affair of the individual employer who deputes Kangaries (recruiters) for the purpose, but the costs of recruiting and forwarding the labour are defrayed from the Immigration fund. These costs are strictly controlled and the control is official. These systems practically eliminate financial competition amongst employers to secure labour. The interests of the entire industry and not of a single employer are considered. For instance, any *bona fide* labourer who is physically fit can secure a free passage to Malay at the expense of the Immigration Fund without incurring any obligation to labour for any particular employer on arrival.

A comparison might also be drawn between the cost of recruitment to tea gardens through the Tea Districts Labour Association and the cost of recruitment to the oil-fields at Digboi. When I visited Digboi last year, I made certain enquiries about how the labour force for the oilfields was recruited, and learned that no recruiting organization is employed and that the bulk of its unskilled labour flows there freely without any cost to the company.

A further instance of cheap recruitment of labour on a large scale was the recruitment for the Indian Labour Corps. I am unable to supply figures showing the exact cost, but, as well as I remember, the recruiting commission did not exceed Rs. 3 for each recruit and the total cost of recruitment must have averaged out at a very low figure.

As an illustration of how a reduction in recruiting costs would benefit the employer and the labourer, the following figures taken from the Assam Report on Immigrant Labour for the year ending 30th June, 1928 (the report for the year ending 30th June, 1929, is not yet available), and the Assam Labour Board Report for the year ending 30th June, 1929, are interesting.

Statement VII (Assam Reports on Immigrant Labour).

Average daily working strength, men and women :—

| | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Assam Valley | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 243,066 |
| Surma Valley | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 112,437 |
| Total | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 355,503 |

Average cash earnings per mensem (Government Resolution on reports) :—

| | Men. | | | Women. | | |
|--------------|------|----|----|--------|----|----|
| | Rs. | a. | p. | Rs. | a. | p. |
| Assam Valley | .. | .. | .. | 13 | 2 | 1 |
| Surma Valley | .. | .. | .. | 10 | 4 | 7 |

i.e., average for men and women for both Valleys = Rs. 10-13 per mensem.

Total number of labourers recruited for Assam in year ending 30th June, 1929 (Assam Labour Board Report), = 73,198.

Cost of recruitment at Rs. 150 a head = Rs. 1,09,79,700, which works out at approximately Rs. 31 for each adult if distributed amongst the 355,503 adults on the average daily working strength of the gardens, i.e., an increase of 25 per cent. in their wages. It may be objected that this is purely theoretical and that it is inconceivable that the tea gardens could recruit their labour free of all cost. To meet this objection, let Rs. 20,00,000, i.e., more than Rs. 25 for each recruit and more than the average cost of importation under the Ceylon system, be allowed towards the cost of importation of the 73,198 recruits who came up in the year ending 30th June, 1929. Deducting this Rs. 20,00,000 from the total assumed cost Rs. 1,09,79,700 we get Rs. 89,79,700 which would be available for the increase of wages or other purposes. If applied to the increase of wages it would provide over Rs. 25 for each adult labourer on the average daily working strength, i.e., an increase of over 20 per cent. on the present wages.

If the case of short-term coolies is considered independently of the rest of the labour force, the results would be even more remarkable. If the cost of recruitment for a one-year coolie is taken as low as Rs. 100 and if he assumed to work 24 days in the month at 12 annas a day earning Rs. 18 a month, his wages could be increased by approximately 50 per cent. if the recruitment expenses could be saved. If short-term coolies knew they could earn Rs. 27 or even Rs. 24 a month of 24 working days I believe that labour would flow in freely without any cost to the employer.

(b) The second important defect which I have noted in the Tea Districts Labour Association system is that it does nothing to promote the free flow of labour to Assam. Recruitment for Assam tea gardens has now been in progress for over 70 years, and the industry is as far off as ever from the ideal of a free and unrecruited flow of labour to its gardens. It is a striking condemnation of the system that the planter has still, after 70 years' connection with the recruiting districts, to pay roughly Rs. 150 to get a labourer induced to take employment under him. The fact that the Assam Oil Company has secured a free flow of labour to the remotest district of Assam shows that the methods of the tea industry have not been the best that could have been adopted.

In the past, the tea industry's chief endeavour to attract labour has been in the direction of high recruiting commissions to recruiters. Recruiting expenses have been forced up to an unduly high level by the competition amongst employers for labour. So long as there is a scarcity of labour, competition to secure it is bound to continue. This competition may take one of two forms, i.e., payment of higher recruiting commissions and advances, or the offer of higher wages and more attractive conditions of service. As has already been observed, the Indian Tea Association has done nothing to limit the amount of recruiting commissions which may be paid to sardars on their return to their gardens, and the Indian Tea Association could hardly enforce such a limit if it were imposed. On the other hand, the other form of competition for labour i.e., increase of wages and the offer of better conditions of employment, is restricted by the control exercised by the circle committees of the Indian Tea Association. This being so, it is natural that competition should express itself chiefly in the uncontrolled channel, viz., competitive recruiting commissions.

The only class which has benefited by the recruiting commission system of attracting labour is the recruiters. The employers have not, I imagine, saved a pice on their labour bill, and they have done nothing to establish that free flow of labour which is so desirable to the industry. I believe that not only does the payment of high recruiting commissions not tend to establish a voluntary flow of labour to an industry, but it actually militates against it. Till wages find their true level, there will not be a free flow of labour to the tea industry. Once this level is reached, the scarcity of labour should automatically disappear and with it would go the competition amongst employers to secure labour and the necessity of paying recruiting commissions. In the meantime, employers should realise that the recruiting commission system cannot solve the problem of labour scarcity, that it does not save them anything, and that it deprives their labourers of benefits they would secure under the free play of the law of supply and demand. Temporary difficulties may present themselves in cutting adrift from a system which has been in vogue for so many years, but if the industry is solidly combined these difficulties should easily be overcome.

(c) The third defect of the present recruitment system is the monopoly of the Tea Districts Labour Association. It has been noted that it is not possible for an employer, except in a few privileged cases, to recruit legally without the assistance of the Tea Districts Labour Association. This is a great hardship on concerns which are not members of the Tea Districts Labour Association, and its effect tells most severely on poor Indian gardens which cannot afford to pay the high costs of recruiting which prevail for labour obtained through the Tea Districts Labour Association. The result is that such gardens are forced either to recruit illegally or to entice labour from their more fortunate neighbours.

The monopoly of the Tea Districts Labour Association is not a purely natural growth. It has been fostered by legal support and by the Assam Labour Board system. The Assam Labour Board, excepting its official Chairman, is nothing more than a Committee of the Indian Tea Association, and the Tea Districts Labour Association is practically identical with the Indian Tea Association and may be correctly regarded as the recruiting department of the Indian Tea Association. Local Governments have granted many valuable concessions to the Tea Districts Labour Association "and other approved associations," but the Assam Labour Board discourages other associations, so the Tea Districts Labour Association gets practically the entire benefit of the concessions and thereby it has secured its monopoly. This monopoly could not be maintained without legal backing. It does not exist in Darjeeling recruitment nor in recruitment for Assam from Bombay, where Act VI of 1901 does not apply. The fact that the Tea Districts Labour Association could not maintain a monopoly except through legal support under a controlled system is important, as this circumstance would open the door, under an uncontrolled system, for those who wished to recruit in a shady manner to choose some agency other than the Tea Districts Labour Association for the purpose. I am convinced that if, under present conditions, full freedom of recruiting were given, the number of those who would resort to shady methods of recruitment would be by no means negligible. I am equally convinced that the Tea Districts Labour Association would have nothing to do with such recruitment. There are few factors in the recruiting situation which

have impressed me more since I became Chairman of the Assam Labour Board than the honourable manner in which the Tea Districts Labour Association conduct recruiting. I say this to make it clear that in criticising the recruiting system now in vogue, I am not criticising the administration of the Tea Districts Labour Association but the system under which they work.

6. (v) *Possible substitutes.*—The foregoing criticisms of the present system of recruitment have indicated the lines on which an improved system should be framed.

(a) Recruiting agencies should not be limited to garden sardars as at present. I would allow employers to select their recruiters from any class of persons, subject only to the conditions that the recruiter must be duly authorised by a certificate from the employer who appoints him, that he be a person of good character, that he be registered as a recruiter in the office of the official in control of recruitment in the local area in which he is working, and that the District Magistrate should have power to cancel his authority to recruit for reasons recorded.

(b) There should be an Immigration Fund levied by legal authority on an acreage basis from all concerns employing imported labour. All the expenses connected with the recruitment of a labour force should be met from this general fund. The recruitment of labourers would remain an affair of the individual employer, but the payment of the costs of recruitment, at a fixed rate, would be made from the Immigration Fund. This would enable the industry to act as one body, instead of as a number of competing companies in the matter of recruitment expenses. The examples of Ceylon and Malay give rise to the hope that such a system would reduce the costs of importation of labour very greatly and thereby enable employers to improve the conditions of employment in such a way that, in the course of time, a plentiful flow of labour would be attracted to Assam, as has happened with Ceylon and Malay.

(c) Some system of official control would still be necessary for the reasons noted in paragraph 6 (i), and also because it is very unlikely that the tea industry would, by itself, be able to change over suddenly from the present system to a new system based on radically different principles, without some form of official assistance. I consider, however, that official control should be reduced to the minimum necessary to ensure the satisfactory working of the new system. The aim of any new system of control which may be set up should be to place the tea industry, as nearly as circumstances permit, on a level with other industries which are uncontrolled in respect of their recruitment. The Ceylon and the Malay systems provide a very detailed system of control, but in view of the clean record of the tea industry for the past fifteen years, I consider a lot, which is provided for by law in the Ceylon and Malay systems, may be left to the good faith of the industry. At the same time, I would stipulate that whatever official control is retained should be real and not fictitious. If control is needed at all, if the labourer needs protection to any extent in his recruitment, if the employers themselves are to be protected against past mistakes and pit-falls, then the control must not be a sham. The cat must not be set to guard the cream. My solution for providing an effective control which would bear as lightly as possible on the industry is as follows:—

(i) A Labour Department under an official controller should be created. The Immigration Fund should be collected and administered by the Controller. The fund would be a local fund like the Assam Labour Board Fund, and the controller would be responsible to the Government of India for the administration of the fund. He might be assisted in the administration of the fund by a committee consisting of representatives of the employers who provide the money, and of the local Governments in whose jurisdiction recruiting is carried on.

(ii) Registration of emigrants should be in the hands of officials of the Labour Department appointed *ad hoc*. Registration of emigrants was formerly in the hands of Government officials, but the duty was generally entrusted to over-worked officers, who had a multitude of other duties to attend to, and consequently the work was often delayed and carelessly done. All this would be altered if responsible whole-time officers were appointed for the purpose. At present, the work of registration with its attendant duty of reporting offences which come to light in the course of registration is performed by local agents who represent the employers. I propose the abandonment of this system for two reasons:—(a) Registration of emigrants is the stage in the recruitment process at which recruiting offences almost invariably come to light, and it is therefore desirable that the controlling authority should maintain direct contact with what is taking place in the process of recruitment, instead of being beholden to the employer's agent for his information. The present position of local agents is very ambiguous. They are at the same time representatives of their employers and agents of the legal authority (i.e., the District Magistrate) appointed by the Emigration Act to bring employers and their agents to book for offences against the Emigration Act. The local agent has frequently to prosecute a sardar in one capacity and to defend him in another. It is this incongruity of the

functions of a local agent, which necessitates such strict supervision of recruitment and the rigorous insistence on conditions which are often of a purely technical nature. (b) If registration were in the hands of the official controlling authority, the necessity for much of this supervision would vanish. The process of registration would of itself keep the control in touch with what was going on. In such circumstances recruiting could be made free except for the following very simple restrictions :—

(1) All emigrants to be registered by the Registering Officer appointed for the purpose. It should be an offence to recruit a labourer without such registration.

(2) All persons engaged in recruiting to register their names in the Registering Officer's office before engaging in recruiting operations. It should be an offence to recruit without satisfying this condition.

(3) District Magistrates to have authority to declare, for reasons to be recorded, that any person is not a suitable person to take part in recruiting operations, and thereupon it should be illegal for such person to assist or take part in recruitment. Such orders of a District Magistrate to be appealable to the Local Government. Excessive expenditure in recruitment should be a ground for cancellation of an authority to recruit.

(4) Registering officers to have power to reject recruits on the ground of undue influence, fraud or misrepresentation in their recruitment, or for physical unfitness, or, in the case of married women unaccompanied by their husbands and minors and young single females unaccompanied by their lawful guardians if there is reason to suspect that they are emigrating without the consent of their husbands or guardians as the case may be. The Registering Officer should also have power in such cases to detain minors, married women and young single females for a period not exceeding ten days, if necessary, to make enquiries regarding their recruitment.

(5) Beyond the provisions for registration of emigrants and recruiters (including sardars, contractors and all kinds of recruiters in the term) and the prohibition against recruitment by persons who have been disqualified by the District Magistrate, there would be no special recruitment offences. Cases of abduction, kidnapping, etc., would be dealt with under the Indian Penal Code. There would, however, be a set of regulations for accommodation, feeding, medical inspection and transport of emigrants, and officials of the Labour Department would be given powers of inspection necessary to carry out the purposes of the recruiting Act.

It may be asked what would become of the Tea Districts Labour Association under such a system. Apart from the registration of emigrants and the consequent duty of reporting offences and irregularities to the official authorities, which, strictly speaking, is not a legitimate function of a recruiting organization, the Tea Districts Labour Association could retain all its other functions. Its depots might still be used for the accommodation of labourers, its forwarding organization could still be used for forwarding emigrants, and its local agents would still be used for the promotion of recruitment, and, being freed from their dual role of representatives of the employers and watch-dogs for the District Magistrates, they would be in a position to devote themselves unreservedly to their employers' interests, which is not now the case. The Tea Districts Labour Association would act on behalf of the employer in all the stages of emigration up to the recruitment and registration of the labourer. Thereafter, in housing, feeding and forwarding the labourer they would act as agents for the Immigration Fund Committee, and consequently under its control, and would be paid at an agreed rate for the services rendered. For the expenses incurred in recruitment prior to the registration of the labourer a fixed sum, to be determined in consultation with the tea industry, would be paid for each labourer recruited.

It must be recognised that this system would not be so pleasant for the Tea Districts Labour Association as the present system. The Association would, however, be left absolutely free of external control up to the stage when the labourer is recruited and brought up for registration, but an effort would be made to restrict recruiting expenses and to make them uniform by paying only a fixed sum from the Immigration Fund for each labourer recruited. This sum would be intended to cover all the costs of recruiting the labourer and all the incidental expenses involved in bringing him to the centre where registration would take place. After registration, the emigrant would be in the care of the Labour Department or the Immigration Fund Committee till he was landed on the garden, but the Tea Districts Labour Association would be given the option of acting as forwarding agents for the Department or Committee. If the Tea Districts Labour Association did not accept this option, the Committee or Department would make its own arrangements.

These proposals follow the Ceylon system closely, but they reduce the all-pervading official control of the Ceylon system to a minimum. The Ceylon system lays down stringent regulations to govern the wages, housing, education, medical care, etc., of labourers. I omit all such regulations from my proposals, firstly, because I consider that they are quite distinct from the control of recruitment and should

not find any place in an emigration law, and secondly because it would, in my opinion, be unjust to single out the Assam tea industry for special legislation in these respects. The Assam tea industry has already suffered severely from discriminatory legislation, and it is time now that, as far as possible, it should be treated in the same way as other industries, so that if legislation on such matters should prove necessary, Assam tea alone should not be singled out for legislation, but should be dealt with along with other similar agricultural industries.

A further point should be noticed regarding my proposals. They do not commit the tea industry to permanent tutelage. When the new system is firmly established and working satisfactorily, the control of the Immigration Fund could be handed over to the industry. The industry already administers the Tea Cess Fund for objects common to the entire industry.

APPENDIX A.

Estimated Cost of Recruiting a Labourer from Ganjam Agency to Lakhimpur District.

| | Rs. As. |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Assam Labour Board cess on sardar | 1 8 |
| 2. Assam Labour Board cess on emigrant | 1 8 |
| 3. Tea Districts Labour Association's commission (<i>vide</i> Supplementary Addendum to Tea Districts Labour Association Handbook for 1928-29) | 12 0 |
| 4. Tea Districts Labour Association capitation fee on sardar (<i>vide</i> page 15 of Tea Districts Labour Association Handbook for season 1925-26) | 5 0 |
| 5. Forwarding charges on emigrant :—Berhampur (Ganjam) to Gauhati, Rs. 19-12 ; Gauhati to Dibrugarh <i>via</i> Lumding, Rs. 7-4. (Pages 20 and 23 of Addendum to Tea Districts Labour Association Handbook, season 1925-26, for use 1927-28) | 27 0 |
| 6. Forwarding charges on sardar (both ways) :—Dibrugarh to Gauhati <i>via</i> Lumding, Rs. 7 ; Gauhati to Berhampur (Ganjam), Rs. 14, Berhampur (Ganjam) to Gauhati, Rs. 15-12 ; Gauhati to Dibrugarh <i>via</i> Lumding, Rs. 7. (Pages 20 and 23 of Addendum to Tea Districts Labour Association Handbook, season 1925-26, for use 1927-28) | 43 12 |
| 7. Clothing, etc., to emigrant (page 10 of Addendum to Tea Districts Labour Association Handbook, season 1925-26, for use 1927-28) | 10 0 |
| 8. Bonus to emigrant | 5 0 |
| 9. Advance to sardar (Column 7 of Appendix A to Annual Report on the working of the Assam Labour Board during the year ending 30th June, 1929) | 51 12 |
| 10. Commission to sardar, say | 20 0 |
| 11. Sundries, such as <i>khoraki</i> charges, hospital charges, etc., approximately | 3 0 |
| 12. In addition a proportionate share of the following expenses have to be added :—Tea Districts Labour Association membership subscription, salary of company's recruiting supervisor, say | 10 0 |
| Total | 190 8 |

Note.—The present railway fare from Berhampur (Ganjam) to Dibrugarh is Rs. 19-9-3, so that the Tea Districts Labour Association forwarding charge for each adult emigrant is Rs. 7-6-9 in excess of the actual railway fare, and in the case of sardars the excess on upward and downward journey is Rs. 4-9-6 for each sardar.

APPENDIX B.

Copy of the tour notes of the Chairman of the Assam Labour Board on his last visit (4th October, 1929 to 6th November, 1929) to the coal mines at Margherita.

Ledo.—I inspected the coal mines here and was very interested in the labour arrangements of the company. There is a mixed labour force of about 3,000 to 4,000 labourers, including Nepalese, Makranies, Peshwaris, Chinese and Hindus from the United Provinces, Bihar and Central Provinces. The Makrani, Nepali, Peshwari and Chinese labour force is not recruited under the Emigration Act. Labour from the United Provinces, Bihar and Central Provinces is recruited through the Tea Districts Labour Association under the Act. Comparison of the cost of recruitment under the different systems is interesting. The Nepalese come voluntarily and their recruitment costs practically nothing. The Makranies and Peshwaris are recruited on commission from Karachi and Peshawar districts. They cost Rs. 55 a head. The Chinese are recruited from south-east China and cost Rs. 125 a head. The labourers from Bihar, the United and Central Provinces recruited

through the Tea Districts Labour Association cost on an average Rs. 100 a head. This figure is much lower than the ordinary average of Tea Districts Labour Association coolies. The lower cost is due to the fact that the employment offered by the Ledo mines is popular and each sardar recruits on an average 7 labourers against a little over one labourer recruited by each tea garden sardar.

The work in coal mines is harder than on tea gardens, and in consequence the wages offered are slightly higher but there is not a great difference. Coolies are allowed to return to their homes any time they desire to go and are repatriated at the company's expense if they have done 425 days' work for the company. Any cooly who becomes physically unfit to work is also repatriated free by the company.

On arrival coolies receive 14 days' free rations and an advance of Re. 1 each. Sardars receive Rs. 15 commission in addition to the advances they receive in the recruiting districts for each labourer brought in. The Company has also a labour force at Dibrugarh for loading coal on to the steamers. No recruitment has to be done for this labour force as a large number of labourers have settled there permanently and fresh recruits come voluntarily whenever a vacancy occurs. The company issues a statement setting forth the conditions of employment in the coal mines to its sardars. This statement is a model of clearness and precision. It would be an advantage if tea gardens could issue similarly precise statements.

INDIAN TEA ASSOCIATION.

I.—Recruitment.

1. *Origin of Labour—(Assam)*—(i) *Extent of migration.*—A copy of the Tea Districts Labour Association recruiting map is attached showing the principal recruiting districts in colours.* Since the map was published, the whole of the Madras Presidency has been thrown open to recruiting, but the Tea Districts Labour Association has only one agency in the non-coloured area, viz., at Cuddapah, whence a little recruiting in the ceded districts of Madras is conducted. Generally speaking, labour from this area, which is very dry with a rainfall of about 20 inches per annum, is unsuitable for settlement in Assam. Act VI of 1901 does not apply to the Bombay Presidency and recruiting is accordingly free. The Tea Districts Labour Association has an agency at Igatpuri with sub-agencies at Surat, Thana and Dohad. The general statistics (Annexure A)—attached to this note, give the numbers recruited from these areas. Act VI of 1901 also does not apply to the Berar Districts of the Central Provinces but the Labour Association does not recruit therein. The Khond Mahals Sub-Division of Bihar and Orissa is also excluded. It is a Government estate and a very backward tract.

Act VI of 1901 applies to the western districts of the United Provinces, and by a Section 3 Notification, recruiting is permitted therein. Attention is called to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, paragraph 508. The Government of the United Provinces has not yet given effect to this recommendation, although their attention was drawn to it by the industry. The Act has not been extended to the Punjab, and the Tea Districts Labour Association does not recruit there. It extends to the whole of Bengal, although only a portion of that Presidency is coloured. The absence of colour here means that recruiting is not conducted in these tracts.

Native States and the Feudatory States of Orissa and the Central Provinces.—The position as regards these States needs elucidation. Most States prohibit recruiting for tea estates within their borders. Certain States of Behar and Orissa have accepted what are known as the "Model Rules" whereby recruiting is permitted. The State of Jashpur has entered into an agreement with the Tea Districts Labour Association permitting recruiting within the State on the lines of the "Model Rules." Even from the States which have not accepted the "Model Rules" and which prohibit recruiting for tea estates, however, large numbers of labourers seek out sardars and recruiters and migrate to tea gardens. The Government of India recognised the movement and altered the definition of the word "emigrate" in Act VI by the amending Act of 1915, so as to bring such subjects of Native States within the purview of the Act as soon as they entered British Territory.

Several tea gardens received recruits from the State of Bastar, one of the Chhatishgarh Feudatory States in the Central Provinces. The State is administered by the British Government on behalf of the minor Rani, but nevertheless recruiting for tea estates is prohibited within the State. The results of this prohibition are that thousands of immigrants from this State are now settled contentedly in Assam and are not allowed to visit the State, or to recruit their relatives.

* Not reproduced.

Attached is the caste analysis statement*, which indicates very clearly the class of labour recruited, viz., Aboriginals and the "lower" Hindu castes.

(ii) *Causes of particular streams of migration.*—Facilities for obtaining work on tea estates constitute a real boom to the agricultural classes in several extensive tracts of India.

Attached is a series of graphs,* indicating the seasonal movement to Assam of labour over several years, together with a curve showing the average movement calculated over ten years from 1916-26. (The Tea Districts Labour Association year is from 1st September to 31st August). All these curves have a striking similarity. The maximum point is in March, when no rice cultivation operations are in progress, and as ploughing begins in May and June, the movement falls off owing to local demand for agricultural labour. The minimum point is reached in September-October when all available agricultural labour is absorbed in the urgent work of reaping the rice harvest. Abnormal conditions at any period of the year are immediately reflected in the curve as an irregularity, e.g., when in June, 1927-28, there was very little rain. So in 1928-29 when an exceedingly hot and dry May in Chota Nagpur, Sambalpur, and adjoining districts resulted in an increased movement to Assam owing to fears of a bad monsoon.

The annual height of the curve is governed by local conditions, but in order to study these, it is not possible to take the figures for all India, as every year certain areas are more or less in difficulties, while others have good harvests. There are therefore attached figures for the Chota Nagpur Division of the Province of Bihar and Orissa for the last twelve years—(Annexure B). This period has been selected so that the abnormal figures for 1918-19, the year of the last general famine, may be included.

The figures below show the movement from the recruiting districts to the tea districts in that year and in the following, when conditions were still unsettled :—

| | | | | | | | Souls. |
|---------|--------|----|----|----|----|-------------|---------|
| 1918-19 | Assam | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 118,097 |
| | Dooars | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 28,136 |
| 1919-20 | Assam | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 30,359 |
| | Dooars | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 3,949 |
| | | | | | | | <hr/> |
| | | | | | | Total | 180,541 |

In those years the Tea Districts Labour Association was not handling, as it now is, practically all recruiting for Dooars estates. Many Dooars and Terai estates did their own recruiting independently and, at a conservative estimate, it may be stated that in those two years, something like 200,000 recruits found employment on tea estates in North East India. The total population of Chota Nagpur in 1921 was 5,650,028, so that over 3 per cent. of the population found refuge in tea estates. Pressure on the soil must have been considerably relieved, for in 1920-21 we find only 5,537 souls proceeding to tea estates, the figures dropping in season 1923-24 to 3,679. Since then there has been a steady increase, the figures for 1928-29 being 46,868. The total figures for the duodecennium are 313,539, or an annual average of 26,100 approximately, or about .45 of the total population. This figure .45 is slightly over-estimated since from the Gangpur, Jashpur and Sirguja Feudatory States certain labourers are received and appear as "Chota Nagpur" Labour.

It may be of interest to compare these figures with the Census of 1921 figures of those employed in coal and other mines, and the metal industries of Bihar and Orissa.

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|--|----|----|----|----|----|---------------|
| 1921. | Bihar and Orissa mines | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | †127,000 |
| | Residents of Bihar and Orissa employed in Bengal mines | | | | | | 69,000 |
| | Metal industries, Bihar and Orissa | .. | .. | .. | .. | | 34,250 |
| | | | | | | | <hr/> 230,250 |

These include large numbers from Orissa, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces and it is obvious that the Bihar and Orissa industries cannot provide the same facilities to needy agriculturists as does tea.

The services rendered by the tea industry to the Bihar and Orissa Provinces generally did not go unrecognised, as the following extract from the Government of Bihar and Orissa, Financial Department—Resolution No. 2837-Com. E., dated 14th October, 1920—indicates :—

" 6. As remarked last year, emigration serves to mitigate the rigours of scarcity and to solve the problem produced by the prevailing high prices of food grain."

* Not reproduced.

† This figure includes Natives of other Provinces employed in Bihar and Orissa Mines, details of whom are not available.

(iii) *Changes in recent years.*—The only changes of importance are the falling off of emigration from the districts of Singhbhum, Hazaribagh and Manbhum, and the Western districts of Bengal. In the case of Singhbhum, the cause is no doubt the growth of Tata's Steel and Iron Works, and the allied companies; in the other districts the factor has been the demand of the coalfields and the opportunities for casual labour afforded in the Eastern districts of Bengal in connection with jute and paddy cultivation. Extensive railway construction works have also absorbed large numbers of labourers in areas whence previously they used to emigrate to tea. Important among these works are the Central Coalfields Railway through Hazaribagh and Palamau, the Raipur-Vizianagram Railway, the Vizagapatam Harbour Scheme and similar projects.

2. *Contact with villages.*—(A) *Assam.*—(i) *Extent and frequency of return.*—These statistics would be more readily obtainable from tea estates, but the sirdari system of recruiting is regarded as maintaining contact with villages. Every year between twenty and thirty thousand coolies are given sirdars' certificates (statistics could be obtained from the Assam Government) and it is known that roughly one-third of these do not return to their gardens. It is in fact a mode of repatriation. Sirdars' certificates are given in practically every case of a coolie proceeding to his home on leave, or because he thinks he wishes finally to sever his connection with tea. This is necessary, as according to the interpretation of Local Governments, the return of a leave coolie or a "name-cut" is looked upon as a fresh act of "emigration" necessitating all the formalities. If a man has a sirdar's certificate he may return and be assisted to return within a year.

"Short term" and "fixed term" recruiting, when repatriation at the expense of the garden is guaranteed, has been recently growing, particularly in the Ranchi and Santal Pergannas Districts. It is responsible for about 50 per cent. of the migration of these districts.

(ii) *Extent of permanent labour force.*—These statistics are not readily available.

(B) *Dooars, Terai.*—(i) *Extent and frequency of return.*—Annually a certain percentage of the labourers are sent back to their country to recruit new labour and return after two or three months. Others return of their own accord after working for a varying number of years, but a fairly large percentage have permanently settled on tea gardens and have more or less lost touch with their country.

(ii) *Extent of permanent labour force.*—Possibly at least ninety per cent. of the labour force can be considered permanent, but some castes return to their country more frequently than others, e.g., Oraons generally stay for much longer periods on the gardens than Mundas.

3. *Methods of Recruitment*—(A) *Assam*—(i) *Existing methods.*—For estates situated in the six labour districts of Assam recruiting must be done by a certificated "garden sirdar" working under the supervision of a duly licensed "Local Agent".

A garden sirdar must be an employee of the estate, and is given a certificate by his employer authorising him to recruit labour. He then appears before a magistrate within whose jurisdiction his estate lies, and if the magistrate considers he is a fit and proper person to recruit labour he countersigns the license. The sirdar is then consigned to the recruiting districts, usually his native district, where he comes into the care of the "Local Agent".

A local agent is licensed by the district magistrate of the recruiting districts to whom an application is made through the Assam Labour Board by the employer, or group of employers, who propose to retain his services. The Assam Labour Board, through its supervisors, makes enquiry as to the fitness of the candidate, and may either recommend that the license be granted, or refuse to recommend that the license be issued. All local governments with the exception of that of the province of Bihar and Orissa have agreed to respect the veto of the Assam Labour Board. In the case of the province of Bihar and Orissa, if the district magistrate wishes to grant a license despite the disapproval of the Board, he shall refer the matter to the Government whose decision shall be final.

Although any employee of an estate is eligible to work as a garden sirdar, Government express the opinion that the selection of garden sirdars should be limited to the labouring classes themselves. The result is that sirdars are themselves simple labourers whose chance of successful recruitment is to recruit in the vicinity of their own home, and among their own caste or tribe. The average success has been very low and has not since the famine years 1918-19, and 1919-20 exceeded 1.35 adults per sirdar employed. Even in the famine year 1918-19 the average success was only 2.97 adults per sirdar recruited.

The industry maintains a large forwarding department which takes charge of sirdars proceeding to the recruiting districts at the terminal forwarding stations of

Gauhati, Goalundo or Naihati, and escorts them to the local agency. Later, the forwarding department escorts sirdars and recruits to their respective gardens, arranging railway accommodation and feeding them en route.

The local agent keeps the sirdars in funds, limiting advances to what experience has shown to be requisite. The general instructions issued to local agents on this point are that sirdars are to be given sufficient money to pay for their own maintenance while in the recruiting districts, together with money sufficient to pay the expenses of bringing in recruits. Usually a sirdar is given a first advance on reporting at the agency, on receipt of which he proceeds to his home, returning after two or three weeks with his report as to recruiting prospects. His further advances depend on these recruiting prospects as ascertained by the local agent.

The sirdar must personally get into contact with recruits : no one who is not licensed under the Act may take any part in recruiting. It has been held that even a missionary advising a member of his flock to find a sirdar and emigrate to an estate in Assam known to him in time of need, transgresses the law. The local agent himself is not permitted to "recruit" even voluntary emigrants, e.g., persons who know of Assam and wish to go there, or who have already been in Assam and wish to return. In all such cases the local agent must refuse to accept the labour direct and inform them they are to find sirdars to "recruit" them. The Governments of the Central Provinces and Bengal have, however, made an exception in the case of an ex-tea garden labourer volunteering to return to his original estate ; the local agent in these provinces may forward such labourers, making a special report of the circumstances to the district magistrate.

Many gardens are willing to take labour for short terms—six months, nine months, or a year—and to guarantee repatriation at garden expense to such. Even this class of labourer must be recruited by a licensed sirdar specially deputed for the purpose of recruiting labour ; and all the formalities are to be followed.

On a sirdar bringing in recruits, the local agent is to ascertain whether they are willing to proceed to the garden, whether they understand the conditions of work and the terms offered ; and he is particularly to satisfy himself that no individual has been induced to emigrate by fraud, misrepresentation, or undue coercion. On being satisfied that the recruit is a voluntary and suitable emigrant, he "registers" the individual. Copies of the register, showing all rejections, are sent to the district magistrate.

Emigrants are given an outfit of clothing and utensils, and a bonus of five rupees ; they are inoculated against cholera and vaccinated for smallpox. Medical examination is optional, though very few gardens abstain from having recruits medically examined.

(ii) *Possible improvement.*—The defects of the system, together with other defects of Act VI of 1901 will be discussed in detail in replying to item I (6) (iv). The above description of recruiting methods will serve to indicate the reason why recruiting is so expensive. Obviously the larger the number of recruits an individual sirdar obtains, the less is the cost per coolie. The present system of recruiting, however, does not lend itself to a greater average success per sirdar than 1.35 adult recruits as a maximum, except in seasons of scarcity ; and in this fact, and in the fact of the diminishing average cost when a large number is recruited per sirdar, is to be found the reason for the tendency to fill up a garden with labour in time of scarcity or famine.

(iii) *Public employment agencies.*—There are no such agencies, and these would not appear to fit in with Assam conditions, except that every local agent might and should be considered as a public employment agency, the local agent being empowered to send volunteer applicants to the gardens to which they wished to go, or to gardens which had intimated their willingness to take such labour.

(B) *Dooars and Terai*—(i) *Existing methods.*—Recruiting for the Dooars is free ; no statute on the analogy of Act VI of 1901 applies.

The great fields for recruiting for the Dooars and Terai estates are Chota Nagpur and the Santal Pergannas, which were till recently the only fields. There is also a large population of Nepalese, a great number of whom were born on the tea estates and may be regarded as indigenous. No recruitment in Nepal for employment in this district is permitted by the Nepal Durbar ; and any fresh additions to the labour force employed in tea consist of voluntary immigrants from Nepal or Sikkim, generally relations of those already in tea.

Statistics of recruiting from Chota Nagpur have already been provided in connection with Item 1. They indicate that after the big famine year 1918-19 pressure on the soil in Chota Nagpur was relieved, to such an extent that the migration of labour to tea estates came almost to a standstill. The same was the experience in the Santal Pergannas. Simultaneously with the famine was an influenza epidemic,

which almost decimated the population, thus further relieving pressure on the soil. In 1921, therefore, Dooars and Terai tea estates were compelled to look further afield than Chota Nagpur and Santal Pergannas for their labour, and began to recruit in Madras and the Central Provinces. The percentage of recruiting from the two last-mentioned districts is small.

With the recrudescence of migration from Chota Nagpur and the Santal Pergannas, recruiting has been more and more confined to these areas. The progress return, copy attached (*vide* p. 80) indicates the movement of labour; and the caste *statistics indicate the classes recruited.

The Indian Tea Association looks upon the history of recruiting for Dooars and Terai estates as indicative of the capacity of the industry to control itself and to ensure the absence of objectionable methods of recruiting, resulting in the exploitation of the Indian labourer.

The system of recruitment is mainly sirdari, generally supervised by the Tea Districts Labour Association, although some gardens have their own staff.

(ii) *Possible improvement.*—The system works well and it would be difficult to improve.

(iii) *Public employment agencies.*—There is no need of public employment agencies, the present system having been in use for a great many years and having worked on the whole smoothly. Labourers are voluntarily brought into central depots in the recruiting districts and are medically examined before being entrained. Peons in the service of the Tea Districts Labour Association accompany batches of labourers to their destination, besides which agents of the Tea Districts Labour Association are stationed at the principal junctions on the railway to look after their comfort, arrange for food, and see them safely on their journey.

4. *Extent and Effects of Disturbance of Family Life.*—The system allows of the least possible disturbance to family life, family parties being the almost universal rule, no married women or minor being accepted at the depot without the consent of the husband or guardian. Under the short term recruitment system, single men come up for a period of generally not more than twelve months, but they form a small proportion of migrants.

6. *Recruitment for Assam*—(i) *Need of retention of control.*—The Indian Tea Association is of the opinion that some mild form of legislation is necessary as a safeguard in the event of the removal of all the restrictions which are imposed by Act VI on the methods of recruitment for Assam. The Association does not favour the idea of uncontrolled and independent action by individual employers. While it believes that control should, and could with efficiency, be imposed and operated by the industry itself, the Association understands that local governments will not agree to the removal of all restrictions on recruiting methods, unless their district magistrates have power, if necessary, to step in and put a stop to malpractices and to prevent malefactors from recruiting. This stipulation of the local governments appears to the Association reasonable; and, if there is some safeguard against the arbitrary exercise or abuse by district magistrates of the powers granted, the existence of these powers will greatly strengthen the hands of whatever controlling staff the industry may put in charge of its free recruiting.

(ii) *Administration of present system.*—The present system, which restricts the recruiting agency to garden sirdars who must be of the labouring class, is admittedly full of anomalies. It works as well as it does simply because the industry as a whole desires to be law-abiding. Practically all labourers sent to Assam are recruited under the control of the Tea Districts Labour Association. The local agents of the Association discharge the following main functions:—

(1) They supervise and generally look after garden sirdars and register and forward all recruits.

(2) They have to see that the law is observed in recruiting both by garden sirdars and by others who may take part in it.

(3) They have to keep the district magistrate on the one hand, and the Assam Labour Board on the other, fully informed of what is going on so that these functionaries may be enabled to discharge their respective duties.

The district magistrates who, if not themselves Superintendents of Emigration, are always in a position to give orders to the Superintendent, have power to cancel the licences of local agents; and, in provinces where Section 63 has not been dispensed with by notification under Section 91, they can cancel garden sirdars' certificates also.

The Assam Labour Board was called into being in 1915 at the instance of Assam tea interests which required the assistance of Government to enable the operations of "arcuttis"—meaning professional recruiters—to be effectively suppressed. The constitution of the Board provides for the supervision of local agents and generally of the recruitment, engagement, and emigration to the labour districts of natives of India under Act VI. The Board annually reports to the Government of India.

In its earlier days the chief function of the Chairman of the Board, and of its executive staff, was the suppression of arcuttis. In discharging this latter function, and in all other subsequent campaigns of the Board against evildoers, the reports of local agents have been the usual starting points. For a good many years undesirable recruiting practices have disappeared and the only blots on the escutcheon have been technical breaches of the Act, which have in general been regarded and treated with excessive severity, and referred to as "abuses" quite unjustifiably. With diminution of offences by persons engaged in recruiting, the officers of the Board have devoted more and more of their attention to the "supervision of local agents", the first named function of the Board in Act VI.

(iii) *Composition and working of Assam Labour Board.*—The Assam Labour Board consists of 15 representatives of the tea industry presided over by a Government official appointed in this behalf by the Government of India. The Board has two ordinary meetings in a year, one to pass the budget, the other to pass the annual report. When necessary, the Chairman convenes special meetings. For the discharge of business there is an executive committee.

The chairman of the Board is assisted by three supervisors who travel round their appointed circles inspecting the local agents, and reporting to the chairman as they go. The functions of the supervisors comprise, also, enquiring into reports received and instituting proceedings when necessary.

The principal value of the Board to the industry is that it has afforded a liaison with Government and that the supervision exercised by its officers has been under the control of the industry itself. If the composition of the Board were so altered as to deprive it of those characteristics or to widen its personnel, a very important change in the administration of the recruiting system would be involved, a change entirely inimical to the industry's aspirations for the future of recruiting.

It is considered that the amount of technical and other crime amongst local agents, garden sirdars, and the public, does not justify the existence of the Assam Labour Board. If therefore there is any suggestion to alter the composition of the existing Board we should prefer its abolition, which would help in the reduction of the present very high cost of recruiting.

(iv) *Defects of existing Act and system.*—The principal defects in the existing Act are : (a) Owing to repeated amendments of a slipshod character much of what remains is legally meaningless. (b) It limits recruiting to one class of person only and allows no alternative method of obtaining labour even as a recruiting nucleus. (c) It deprives Assam employers of an important advantage enjoyed by all other employers, namely the right of their agents to assist and forward voluntary emigrants who may have been engaged by the employer personally or otherwise induced to go to a particular estate. (d) It makes no discrimination possible between labour emigrating with a view to colonizing and short term labour going up with a guarantee of repatriation on a definite date. (e) It makes no provision for relaxations or experiments other than the sweeping action of Section 92. (f) It is not possible to relax the strict procedure of the Act to meet emergent conditions such as arise in seasons of severe scarcity or famine. This fact, besides handicapping the Assam employer, militates against the scarcity-affected labourer, who desires immediate employment. By the time he reaches the garden under present conditions, he is usually emaciated and in need of medical treatment. (g) It is not possible under Act VI to remove restrictions from the methods of recruitment while retaining power and prevent evil-doers. (h) The gravest defect of Act VI is that it provides local governments with a means of stopping or restricting Assam recruiting, whereas they have no such powers with regard to other industries.

In addition to the defects, which are so conspicuous in the Act itself, the industry has grounds for complaints against the severity with which, in some places, the letter of the law is enforced even when no ethical wrong-doing or moral turpitude is involved.

A grave defect of the present system is the limitation imposed on the powers of a local agent. His function of registering labourers places him in the most important position in the administration of the Act and in the control of recruiting. Naturally he must be supervised ; but, having provided adequate supervision, he should not be restricted in his activities as he now is by the Act and the rules of local governments. In three directions he should have a free hand : (a) Propaganda and assistance to sirdars in their work. (b) Assistance to voluntary emigrants. (c) Arranging for short term labourers, or providing recruiting nuclei to employers who have no connections.

(v) *Possible substitutes.*—There are two possible directions from which a substitute system can come : (a) New legislation free from the defects of Act VI, whereby the system adumbrated in sub-paragraph (i) above might be operated without imposing any handicap on Assam, territorial or otherwise, as against other provinces or industries. There is no reason why an efficient control should have the effect of

handicapping Assam as the existing notifications under Section 3 of Act VI do. (b) Agreement amongst Assam employers, resulting in the framing of a system of self-controlled recruiting, which would satisfy the Government of India and local governments. This could be introduced at once by the cancellation of all existing Section 3 notifications whereby Section 92 would become fully operative, without putting Act VI bodily out of action.

Whichever line of action be taken the result presumably will be very much the same. There will be a system under which the industry will be free from legal restraints on the methods of recruiting, and can decide for itself what methods and agencies it will employ; the active control and supervision will be exercised by the industry's own officers; the district magistrates will have ultimate powers to put a stop to undesirable practices or persons. The Government of India will thus have an agency watching how it works. The industry looks forward to the repeal of all recruiting legislation which handicaps Assam against all other industries. The free movement of labour has been indicated by the Government of India as the ultimate goal to be attained.

7. *Unemployment*.—There is no unemployment in connection with tea estate labour.

8. *Labour " Turnover "*.—(i) *Average duration of employment*.—It is impossible to strike an average duration of employment. A large proportion of the family groups which go to tea estates settle permanently on the estate, some, on attaining economic independence, moving to Government land as tenants of Government. Others, particularly single males, go to tea estates merely as casual labourers and return to their homes when stress there is alleviated.

(ii) *Extent of casual employment*.—The extent of casual employment varies each year.

The indigenous Kacharies, to the extent of some five or six thousand, find employment during the rains on tea estates; during the cold weather large numbers of Nunias from Bihar and the United Provinces find their way to Assam and take up casual employment. Nagas, and other indigenous hill tribes in the Assam Valley, are afforded employment in clearing jungle during the cold weather. In the Surma Valley a large number of Sylhet Bengalis are also employed.

(iii) *Absenteeism*.—The principal cause of absenteeism, which is seasonal in character, is the necessity of granting leave to the permanent labourers for the cultivation of their own lands. It has been estimated that only 65 per cent. of the total labour force turns out to work daily so that the average number of days worked in a week is 4.5. The time lost in a six-day week is therefore 1.5 per worker per week or 78 days per annum.

II. Staff Organization.

11. *Selection of Managing Staff*.—The managing staffs of the British-owned gardens in the membership of the Association are comprised almost entirely of Europeans recruited in Great Britain and consist of a manager or superintendent with one or more assistants according to the size of the garden. Preference is given, as a rule, to men with training in agriculture or engineering, the qualification demanded being dependent on whether the assistant recruited is intended in the first instance for work in the plantation or in the factory. Men with degrees in agriculture are favoured and numbers have been recruited in recent years.

For Indian-owned gardens the managing staff is recruited from the educated classes. Promotion in all cases depends strictly on merit and skill in the handling of labour.

12. *Recruitment and Training of Subordinate Supervising Staff*.—(i) *Methods in force*.—It is convenient for the purpose of this question to divide the supervising staff of a tea garden into two classes, upper and lower subordinate. The upper subordinate staff would include:—(a) Indian assistants of education and experience who are frequently placed in charge of outlying divisions of an estate or who receive training in the manufacture of tea. (b) Clerks who are engaged locally as young men and trained in accounting and clerical methods in force on the particular estate. (c) Doctor Babus. These are still frequently recruited locally but estates are gradually being staffed with qualified men with the L.M.F. degree or its equivalent. Such men are usually engaged in Calcutta, Dacca, and elsewhere, through one of the training hospitals.

The lower subordinate staff would include:—(a) "Duffadars" or sirdars who are foremen of gangs and who are, wherever possible, recruited from the rank and file of the garden labour force, according to capability, efficiency and the influence which they show over their fellow workers. (b) "Jamadars", "Mohurris" or "Munshis",

who are in subordinate charge of the outdoor work of the estate or of several sections. These are selected and experienced men and require some degree of literacy, as well as character, influence and experience in the control of labour. (c) Teahouse sirdars, who are in direct subordinate charge of the work within the factory.

(ii) *Facilities for Training and Promotion of Workmen*.—So far as work on the plantation is concerned, no great training is required. Skill is obtained in the course of actual employment by the efforts of the worker himself, assisted perhaps, in the first place, by demonstration of the correct methods either by a member of the subordinate-supervising staff or by a relative of the worker. Similar conditions apply in the factory where training is acquired by means of experience, beginning with the less important posts and advancing as vacancies occur.

As already mentioned, promotion from the rank and file to the subordinate supervising staff is strictly by merit and is effected by the manager or by a senior assistant.

13. *Relations between Staff and Rank and File*.—(i) *Relations generally*.—Relations between the staff, European and Indian, and the rank and file of the workers are, as a general rule, harmonious and cordial. In most cases, subordinate supervisors have members of their own families, their relations, or those of their own caste, working directly under them. No rigid or irksome discipline is enforced and disputes between the subordinate staff and the workers are rare. Where trouble does arise, this is usually of a personal nature or it may be due to injudicious handling by inexperienced staff. All grievances brought to the notice of the management are carefully investigated by the manager who is readily accessible for the hearing of complaints which he settles himself or with the assistance of a Panchayat or small committee of influential employees.

(ii) *Works committees: their constitution, extent and achievements*.—Works Committees are unknown; and no necessity for them exists.

15. *Contractors and Intermediaries*.—(i) *Extent and character of work given on contract*.—The aim of all tea estates is to be self-contained and, where practicable, to give the benefit of any contracts to the people resident on the property. It is only when the labour force is short of requirements that outside contractors are engaged and the works on which they are generally employed include:—(a) Building and equipment of factories and bungalows. (b) Carriage of heavy materials, fuel, etc. (c) Cutting of firewood, timber, thatch and bamboos. The employment of contractors is becoming more general in the Assam and Surma valleys.

A distinction should be drawn between "piece work" and "contract work". The former is sometimes loosely referred to as "contract work" but is carried out by the settled garden labour—occasionally with casual outside help—and is not contract work in the usually accepted meaning of the term.

(ii) *Extent of sub-contracting*.—Sub-contracting is not recognized by the gardens.

(iii) *Control exercised over working conditions*.—The conditions under which contracted labour works are very similar to the normal estate conditions. The extent of control will vary from garden to garden but, generally speaking, no special control is required; it is sufficient for the management to ascertain by inspection that adequate progress is being made with the work against the advance payments given to the contractor.

(iv) *Effect*.—The contracting system, so far as it is employed, works smoothly and satisfactorily and there are no special facts to be noted. Contracted labour is ordinarily employed on a "piece work" basis and the work is usually done more expeditiously and more satisfactorily than by time paid workers, though less direct supervision is exercised by the garden staff. Contracts given to outsiders do not affect the resident labour force.

III. Housing.

16. *Extent to which Housing is provided*.—(i) *By employers*.—Housing is provided entirely by employers except in cases where the labourer resides outside the garden lines when he erects his own house with material supplied free by the estate.

(ii) *By Government or other public agency*.—Nil.

(iii) *By private landlords*.—Nil.

(iv) *By workers themselves*.—Labourers residing outside the garden grants build their own houses.

18. *Nature of Accommodation provided in each class*.—(ii) *In relation to best type from health point of view*.—There is an increasing number of iron frame, brick walls and corrugated-iron roof houses, known as *pucca* houses, being erected on tea estates, but a large proportion of the houses still consist of *kutcha* structures, i.e., thatch roofs with mud and plaster walls. The majority of the labourers prefer the latter type of building although there is an increasing inclination towards the *pucca* building. A great deal depends on the type of labourer.

There is a difference of opinion among medical officers regarding the two types ; many consider the modern house is not so healthy.

(iii) *Provision made for lighting, conservancy and water supply.*—There is no provision for lighting and, as regards conservancy, little progress is recorded (see 26 (i)). Adequate supplies of water are available at all estates.

20. *Rent rates in various classes.*—No rents are charged.

21. *Special problems arising in connection with various classes of Housing, e.g., Sub-letting.*—Occupation of employers' houses by tenants in other employ : Eviction. Questions of sub-letting do not arise, nor is the labourer evicted.

(As the Royal Commission will be visiting the Tea Districts, an opportunity will be afforded members of inspecting the housing provided for tea garden labour.)

IV. Health.

23. *General Health Conditions of Workers (A) Assam.*—(i) *Figures of mortality.*—

The following are the death rates per thousand during the last five years for tea estates in the Assam and Surma Valleys, as abstracted from Government returns :—

| | Assam Valley | Surma Valley. |
|---------|--------------|---------------|
| 1923-24 | 22.51 | 23.90 |
| 1924-25 | 23.91 | 21.24 |
| 1925-26 | 21.79 | 18.04 |
| 1926-27 | 21.16 | 19.23 |
| 1927-28 | 20.61 | 18.66 |

(ii) *Birth-rate and infant mortality.*—The birth-rates in the two above districts per thousand are as follows :—

| | Assam Valley | Surma Valley |
|---------|--------------|--------------|
| 1923-24 | 31.11 | 30.80 |
| 1924-25 | 30.41 | 30.18 |
| 1925-26 | 30.62 | 32.49 |
| 1926-27 | 31.64 | 33.70 |
| 1927-28 | 32.41 | 31.73 |

Returns of infantile mortality are not shown separately in the Assam Government Returns. There is increasing attention given to this important problem of infantile mortality, but unfortunately the idiosyncrasies of the labourer retard more marked advance.

(B) *Dooars.*—(i) *Figures of mortality.*—The following are the death-rates per thousand for the past five years for tea gardens in the Dooars, abstracted from the annual reports on the working of the Jalpaiguri Labour Act for the years specified :—

| | | | | | | | |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| 1923-24 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 29.21 |
| 1924-25 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 26.27 |
| 1925-26 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 23.19 |
| 1926-27 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 22.91 |
| 1927-28 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 22.40 |

(ii) *Birth-rate and infantile mortality.*—(a) *Birth-rate.*—The undernoted birth-rate figures for tea estates in the Dooars are also quoted from the annual reports on the working of the Jalpaiguri Act :—

| | | | | | | | |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----------------|
| 1923-24 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 44.09 per mille |
| 1924-25 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 43.34 |
| 1925-26 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 42.90 |
| 1926-27 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 40.94 |
| 1927-28 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 39.73 |

(b) *Infantile mortality.*—The following figures, taken from the same source, show the number of deaths, under one year of age, per thousand births :—

| | | | | | | | |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------|
| 1923-24 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 108.22 |
| 1924-25 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 98.37 |
| 1925-26 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 90.60 |
| 1926-27 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 91.16 |
| 1927-28 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 80.05 |

(iii) *Working conditions.*—It is difficult to find more congenial agricultural conditions than on tea gardens. Work is so arranged that a minimum wage is obtainable for a matter of three hours work per day, thus leaving ample leisure for private cultivation and relaxation such as fishing, woodcutting, etc. Work is obtainable throughout the year and is not seasonal, though cultivation is more intensive during the wet season and opportunities for earning money greater.

Casual leave is readily given and absences due to *bona fide* illness are usually counted as attendances. Labourers do not have to travel far to the scene of their work from their homes.

(iv) *Dietary*.—The staple food of the tea garden labourer is generally rice and pulses, but this is supplemented by fruits, vegetables, and meat. The estates provide the labourer as far as possible with plots of land for the cultivation of rice and vegetables for which no rent, or in some cases nominal rental only, is charged.

(v) *Physique*.—It is contended that the physique of all acclimatized labourers compares more than favourably with that of their caste in the recruiting areas.

(vi) *Relation between housing and mortality*.—Statistics of birth and death rates been given above. The best way to estimate the effect of tea garden conditions is to compare those statistics with the provincial statistics available from Government. In their resolution on the Report on Labour Immigration for the year ending 30th June, 1928, the Government of Assam remarked :—

" In both valleys the birth-rate was again higher, and the death-rate lower than the provincial rates."

24. *Extent of Medical Facilities provided*.—(i) *By employers*.—Medical facilities are provided by employers for which no charge is made. It is customary for a group of gardens to employ a European Medical officer who has under his charge on each estate an Indian medical officer and compounders. There is also a hospital or dispensary on each garden fully stocked with such drugs as are required. The industry has in particular directed efforts towards reducing the incidence of malaria, kala-azar, hookworm, etc., and contributes towards the Tropical School of Medicine, Calcutta, etc.

(ii) *By Government*.—Nil.

(iii) *By other agencies*.—Nil.

(iv) *Provision for women doctors, trained midwives or dais*.—An effort is being made to attract trained midwives, and attention is being directed to the training of dais. Owing to the idiosyncrasies of the labourer progress is slow. It is difficult to obtain midwives with the necessary qualifications.

25. *Extent to which Medical Facilities are Utilised*.—(i) *Generally*.—The labourer takes full advantage of the medical facilities provided by the employers, although there are still difficulties found in obtaining the confidence of the aborigines.

(ii) *By women*.—It is found that women generally more readily avail themselves of the medical facilities offered, except in cases of childbirth where, owing to caste and ceremonial prejudices, there is frequently a preference for a midwife of their own caste.

26. *Sanitary Arrangements*.—There is a disinclination on behalf of the labourer to use latrines. At certain estates some progress has been made, but such successes are isolated. *Vide* also in this connection, 19 (iii).

27. *Extent and Nature of Official Supervision*.—(i) *Work of Boards of Health in special areas*.—There are no Boards of Health in the Tea Districts.

(ii) *Inspection of plantation*.—The tea estates are inspected periodically in Assam by the Magistrate and, if an estate is unhealthy, also by the Civil Surgeon. In the Dooars occasional inspections are carried out by the Civil Surgeon only. The Government of Assam reserve the power to classify gardens as "unhealthy". The success of the measures taken by tea estate managers in this direction is indicated by the fact that in the year ending June, 1928, only one garden was classified as "unhealthy" in the Assam valley and no garden in the Surma valley was labelled with this stigma.

28. *Suitability of Existing Factories and Mines Acts and Rules*.—(i) *Control of temperature in factories*.—The system of tea manufacture necessitates the temperature in the factory being kept as low as possible.

29. *Disease*.—(i) *Prevalence of industrial diseases*.—There is no industrial disease.

(ii) *Prevalence of cholera, malaria, hookworm, and other tropical diseases*.—All new labourers imported into Assam are vaccinated against small-pox and inoculated against cholera.

Cholera is endemic in Assam and there are occasional outbreaks, which are however quickly controlled. In the Assam valley for the year ended June, 1928, out of a population on tea estates of over 696,000 there were only 352 deaths from cholera. Malaria is prevalent, but everything possible under the circumstances is being done to mitigate its ravages. Hookworm is also prevalent but is being extensively treated. Kala-azar was prevalent in certain districts, but with the assistance of Government its incidence has been seriously restricted.

31. *Maternity Benefits*.—(i) *Extent and working of existing schemes (includes allowances given before and after childbirth)*.—The expectant mother is allowed leave on full pay, the time varying according to the state of her health. Until the

child is three or four months' old it may be accepted that this pay will be allowed ; and at most estates a bonus of Rs. 5 is allowed at birth with a further Rs. 5 if the child is produced in a healthy condition a year later. The mother and child are kept under frequent medical observation and everything possible is done to assist her with advice, etc.

(iii) *Possibility of Legislation.*—It is not considered that the time is yet ripe to legislate in such matters for tea garden labour.

The foregoing remarks under " Health " refer both to factory and outside labour. The statistics kept by tea gardens do not provide for separate figures, except where these are required under the Factory Act.

V. Welfare.

32. *Extent of Welfare Work.*—(i) *By employers.*—Welfare work on a garden takes the form of providing light, and in many cases unnecessary work, for the purpose of giving debilitated individuals a means of livelihood.

(ii) *By other agencies.*—Nil.

33. *Employment of Welfare Officers and Workers.*—Nil.

36. *Provision of Educational Facilities by Employers.*—Schools are provided when there is a demand for them.

VII.—Safety.

The Indian Factories Act applies to tea garden factories in Bengal and Assam, but owing to these being seasonal and subject to weather vagaries, exemptions from Sections 21, 22 and 26 of Chapter 4 with certain provisions have been allowed. As children are not employed in the factory proper, Section 23 is also of more or less hypothetical application. As the Royal Commission will be visiting the tea districts they will have an opportunity of inspecting tea garden factories. Accidents are fortunately few.

VIII.—Workmen's Compensation.

51. *Workmen's Compensation Act*—(i) *Extent of use.*—The position of the Indian tea industry, so far as workmen's compensation is concerned, is somewhat peculiar in that one part of its labour force—the factory labour—at present comes within the scope of the Workmen's Compensation Act, while the other section, namely, the plantation labour, is excluded. The experience of the Association in regard to the working of the Act is accordingly limited as compared with the experience of what might be termed the purely industrialist employer ; and it is further limited by reason of the comparative paucity of accidents resulting in either death or disablement, which have occurred during the period for which the Act has been in force.

(ii) *Comparison with extent of possible claims.*—In cases of temporary disablement liberal sickness allowances, usually exceeding the amount which could be claimed under the Act, are paid to the injured worker ; while in cases of death and permanent disablement the compensation is similarly generous.

(iii) *Effects on Industry.*—There are no special effects to be noted.

(iv) *Availability and use of insurance facilities and value from workers' point of view.*—In view of the comparatively small number of accidents which occur in tea factories, it is not generally the practice of tea companies to insure against the risk. The workers are themselves safeguarded by the sickness allowances provided for them, and they do not suffer in any way by non-insurance on the part of the employer.

(v) *Desirability of Compulsory Insurance by Employers.*—So far as the tea industry is concerned, the Association considers that any scheme designed to make insurance compulsory would be superfluous.

52. *Desirability of extending the Act to other Occupations.*—The Association has previously had under consideration the question of the extension of the Act to cover workmen employed in tea plantations. Towards the end of 1928 the Government of India, in discussing the question in their letter No. L.1125, addressed to all local Governments, said that " no great difficulty would be created by the inclusion within the Act of workmen engaged in branches of industry which are not particularly hazardous and which are organized, e.g., to workmen employed on plantations " ; and they argued that " the mere fact that an occupation cannot be described as hazardous is hardly sufficient justification for denying compensation to those who suffer from the rare accidents which occur. " The Association accepted the statement and admitted the argument. The suggestion that tea plantation labour should be brought within the Act would not be opposed by the industry ; but it should be noted that conditions of work on a tea garden are such that they almost preclude the possibility of death or incapacity through accident, and to that extent it may be considered that the inclusion of tea plantation coolie labour is superfluous. And in the more probable event of the temporary disablement of a plantation worker, it

is at least questionable whether the disabled coolie would be better off under the Act than he is under present conditions ; for, as has already been pointed out, provision is made by tea companies for the payment of liberal sickness allowances.

As regards the possibility of providing against insolvency of employers, the Association's views on the point are implied in the answer given to Question 51 (v).

53. *Suitability of Provisions relating to :—*

- (i) *Scales of compensation.*
- (ii) *Conditions governing grant of compensation.*
- (iii) *Industrial diseases.*
- (iv) *Machinery of administration.*
- (v) *Other matters.*

In view of its very slight experience of the operation of the Workmen's Compensation Act, the Association has no comments to offer on points detailed under this heading.

IX.—Hours.

A.—*Factories.*

55. *Hours Worked per Week and per Day.*—The hours worked in tea factories in North India vary very considerably, tea being a seasonal crop, but in no case do the hours exceed the maximum laid down in the Factory Act and the rules framed thereunder.

56. *Days Worked per Week.*—Six days, but at the height of the season during a very heavy flush it is occasionally necessary to work on Sundays.

57. *Effect of 60 Hours' Restriction.*—Nil.

60. *Intervals.*—Under Section 21 the Act requires that definite intervals for meals and rest be fixed for all employees during working hours, but tea garden factories in North India are exempted from the observance of this requirement, on condition that the number of workers on a particular job is at least 25 per cent. greater than the number required to do the work at any given time. This exemption is essential owing to the peculiar circumstances attaching to the process of tea manufacture, which is greatly dependent on climatic conditions and makes the working hours vary from day to day.

61. *Day of Rest.*—Owing to the circumstances attaching to tea manufacture, tea factories are exempt from the provisions of Section 22 of the Act enforcing the observance of a weekly holiday, subject to any person not being required to work continuously without a day's leave for more than 14 days at a time.

62. *Exempting Provisions and the use made for them.*—The exemptions have already been dealt with in the foregoing. It should be stated, however, that adult male persons employed solely on maintenance work are also exempt from Sections 21, 27 and 28 of the Act, on the condition that the average weekly hours of work in any one week do not exceed 66 hours.

D.—*Other Establishments. (a) Plantations.*

78. *Hours Worked per Week and per Day.*—The hours worked per week vary considerably, entirely according to the individual necessities of the labourer. For instance, the head of a family which possesses land will seldom turn out to work, but a new arrival who wishes to make money turns out more frequently. The average daily attendance on gardens is not more than 65 per cent. of the numbers on the roll. During the cold weather the average working hours may be taken as 5 per diem, but during the plucking season it may work out about 8 hours per diem. There is no question of exceeding the hours laid down for factories.

79. *Days worked per Week.*—It is questionable if the average exceeds four. There is no necessity for an enactment dealing with working hours so far as the tea industry estate labourer is concerned.

80. *Desirability of Regulation.*—If a regulation could be enforced to ensure workers turning out regularly it would solve the shortage of labour from which the industry suffers, but it would mean the end of a system which has a special appeal for the agricultural worker, who under the present system becomes a sort of feudal tenure-holder, holding land rent free or at trifling rent, with opportunities to cultivate it.

X.—Special Questions Relating to Women, Young Adults and Children.

A.—*Factories.*

81. *Effect of 1922 Act on Employment.*—Nil. There is always a demand for employment in a tea factory, where work is congenial for women and not onerous.

82. *Admission of Infants to Factories.*—This is one difficulty that has had to be contended with, as the mother endeavours to take her children into the factory or its outhouses.

85. *Double Employment of Children*.—Does not arise in tea factories.

87. *Extent of "Blind Alley" Employment*.—There is no "blind alley" in the tea industry, as if employment is not available in the factory it is available on the estate.

The foregoing replies to 81, 82, 85 and 87 refer to employment in tea factories only and not to labourers employed in the outbuildings of a factory where no machinery is used.

C.—*Other Establishments : Plantation.*

92. *Need for Regulation*.—It is not considered that regulation would assist in any way. As already indicated, women employed on tea estates are well housed, do not work excessive hours, and receive every assistance as regards medical relief, etc.

XII.—Wages.

96. *Prevailing Rates of Wages (Time and Piece) and Average Earnings*—(i) *In industry*—It is expected that the Commission will desire information from the up country associations and branches as, owing to the difference in different districts, it is impossible for this Association to give details of the prevailing rates. Generally it might be stated that the family and not the single worker only is the bread winner, and employment is offered to men, women and children on all tea estates. This employment obtains throughout the year and is not confined to specific periods, as in the case of other agricultural industries.

(ii) *In surrounding agricultural areas*.—The wages of agricultural labour in the surrounding agricultural areas are not readily ascertainable, but its measure may perhaps be found in the fact that some five or six thousand Kacharies seek and find work in the Assam Valley, and Sylheti Bengalis in the Surma Valley, from April to October on tea estates under their own duffiadars. This period coincides with their rice cultivation season, and the inference is, therefore, that the rate of wages on tea estates is attractive to residents of the surrounding areas. In the cold weather very large numbers of "Nunias," an earthworking caste from Bihar and the United Provinces, pay their own way up to Assam and take up work on tea estates. Mention has already been made of the hill tribes, who also apply for work.

(iii) *Difference between money wages and money value of all earnings*.—Many estates in Assam still retain the practice of giving cheap rice to labour, i.e., at a rate cheaper than the market rate. This is an inheritance from the old labour contract days when the rate at which rice would be sold to the coolie was included in the contract. But the practice differs from garden to garden, and this Association is unable to generalize on the subject.

97. *Movements in Recent Years*—(i) *Increases and decreases*—Earnings have increased appreciably; some gardens have increased the rate of pay for the standard task, others have reduced the task. The labourer earns more, and in this connection and for the sake of getting actual figures the Royal Commission will no doubt examine the records of the Government of Assam. We quote the following from the Resolution on Immigrant Labour for the year ending June, 1928 :—

"The Governor in Council has noticed with pleasure the further increase in the wages of men, women and children in both valleys. . . . The average cash earnings, calculated on the average working strength, were Rs. 12-11-4 for men, Rs. 11-0-6 for women, and Rs. 6-13-4 for children in the Assam Valley, and Rs. 10-4-7, Rs. 8-6-4, and Rs. 5-4-0 respectively in the Surma Valley. When it is remembered that these figures do not represent the total earnings of the labourers, and that many have also land to cultivate, it cannot be said that the economic condition of the labour force is unsatisfactory."

Twenty years ago (*vide* Report for the year ending June 30th, 1899) the minimum wage on a tea estate was Rs. 5 for men and Rs. 4 for women for a definite task throughout the month.

(ii) *Reasons for variation*.—The principal reason for the increased wages is undoubtedly the increased cost of living and the upward trend of the wages of labour throughout India. With the present facilities for transportation, and the readiness with which Indian labour will migrate, tea is in competition with all other industries, literally from Calcutta to Colaba, and from Madras to the Himalayan foothills.

(iii) *Relations to prices and cost of living (pre-war and post-war)*.—Wages have risen in a greater proportion than has the cost of living. It may be claimed that the average labourer has long since passed the line of bare subsistence and is earning a surplus which might be, and often is, expended on improving his status. In their Resolution of Immigrant Labour for the year 1927-28 the Government of Assam wrote :—

"What is now needed is a gradual and steady improvement of the standard of living and the amenities of life to accompany the gradual and steady increase in wages."

Indian labour of the class from which the tea industry draws its supplies is, however, more concerned with the improvement of status than in the improvement of the standard of living. It is their great aim to become landholders, and the Government statistics of land held outside tea garden grants by ex-tea garden labourers support this view. It was admitted by the Census Commissioner in 1921 that one-sixth of the population of Assam had found its way to Assam *via* tea. Similar remarks apply to the tea gardens in Bengal.

(iv) *Relation to profits.*—Nil.

98. *Amounts sent to villages.*—Statistics of these amounts can be obtained from the Post Office, as the money order system is largely employed. This Association has no record. Large sums are also remitted through recruiters.

99. *Payment in kind and allied problems.*—Actual wages are never paid in kind, but there are amplifications in kind such as free housing, water, firewood, sick pay, medical attendance and medicines, advances free of interest to a very considerable amount, free grazing and land for vegetable cultivation. Land for rice cultivation is provided free or at a nominal charge. These constitute a large increase to the money wages.

100. *Extent and effect of payment through contractors, sub-contractors or headmen.*—This system is only employed in Assam in the case of Kachari and Nunia labour, and may generally be stigmatized as unnecessary. Personal contact of the labourer with the manager is to be preferred.

101. *Methods of fixing wages.*—(i) *By negotiated agreements.*—There are no such agreements in existence in tea. Generally, however, each district endeavours to decide on definite basic rates, in accordance with local conditions.

(ii) *Other means.*—Tasks are fixed by managers according to the nature of the soil or work and supply of leaf. These tasks even vary in gardens in the same company.

102. *Basis of Payment for Overtime and Sunday Work.*—On the few occasions when this occurs, smaller tasks or increased rates of pay are given.

103. *Extent of Standardization.*—Owing to the varying conditions, even on adjacent estates, standardization in the strict sense does not seem possible. The Assam Labour Enquiry Committee recognized this point.

104. *Effect of Wage-changes on Labour Supply.*—More attractive wages increase the supply of labour, particularly of labour which may be regarded as casual. For instance, during the past two or three years short term labour engaged for six months up to a year have been attracted to tea estates, particularly from the Ranchi district and from the Santal Pergannas. But experience has shown that there is a definite relation between the supply of labour and economic conditions obtaining in the recruiting districts. This fact has been emphasized by the graphs* submitted in connection with a previous question. In times of severe scarcity it is safe to say that a recruit seldom thinks of the rate of wages offered. The experience of 1918–19 established that fact.

105. *Minimum Wages—Advisability and possibility of statutory establishment.*—As so few labourers work the full number of days it is considered that the statutory establishment of a minimum wage is unnecessary and would be difficult to enforce.

It must be borne in mind that a large percentage of a labour force cultivate land of their own, and are in a different position from industrial labour, which are dependent on their earnings for their livelihood.

106. *Deductions*—(i) *Extent of fining.*—Fining of labourers is rare, and is only done by the manager personally. It is only resorted to as a punishment in cases of deliberate damage to property.

(ii) *Other deductions.*—Nil.

(iii) *Utilization of fines.*—Proceeds of fines are generally used for the benefit of the labourer.

(iv) *Desirability of legislation.*—Legislation is unnecessary.

107. *Periods of Wage Payment (Day, Week or Month)*—(i) *Periods for which wages paid.*—These vary in different estates; some pay daily, others weekly, and some monthly. In the case of weekly payments, payment is made without any time elapsing; but with monthly payments, payment is made within ten days. Where monthly wages are paid, advances are freely given.

(iii) *Desirability of legislation.*—It is not considered that there is a case for legislation. The existing system is elastic and suitable.

(iv) *Treatment of unclaimed wages.*—These are paid to next of kin.

108. *Indebtedness.*—Advances without interest are given to the labourers to purchase cattle for marriage ceremonies, etc. These are repaid in easy instalments. Such advances to some extent prevent the labourer having recourse to moneylenders.

109. *Bonus and Profit-sharing Schemes.*—There are no profit-sharing schemes but bonuses are frequently paid to labourers who turn out regularly to work.

* *Vide I. (i) (ii)*—graphs not reproduced.

110. *Annual or other Leave.*—The labourer is allowed leave to work his own khets, and generally leave can be obtained to visit relatives in the district or go down to their homes. There are also the usual religious festival holidays. In many cases full pay is given.

XIII.—Industrial Efficiency of Workers.

112 *Comparative Changes in Efficiency of Indian Workers in Recent Years.*—There is a greater inclination for leisure.

115. *Effect on Production of (iii) Expenditure on health and sanitation.*—There is no doubt that the expenditure on health and sanitation (as far as the latter is possible) results in an improvement in the effectiveness of a labour force. This has been before the tea garden employers, as witness the campaigns carried out against malaria, kala-azar, hookworm, etc.

(iv) *Housing.*—It is not possible to say whether the improvement in housing conditions of recent years has had any effect on production.

(v) *Alterations in methods of remuneration.*—The methods of remuneration vary so considerably throughout the tea districts that this Association finds it impossible to give any useful criticisms.

(vi) *Movement in wages levels.*—It is considered that increased earnings result in a lowering of efficiency.

(vii) *Legislative enactments.*—It is considered that the tea industry in Assam has suffered owing to the restrictive nature of Act VI on their recruiting operations. This question is dealt with in detail herein; and meantime, it is only necessary to state that had freer recruiting been possible, there is no doubt that the production of tea could have been appreciably increased.

(viii) *Dietary.*—This is bound up with caste questions, with which it is undesirable to interfere.

(ix) *Alcohol and drugs.*—The employers have co-operated with the authorities in restricting the consumption of alcohol or drugs. There is no doubt that over-indulgence in these does impair the efficiency of the labourer. It must be borne in mind, however, that brewing and consumption of rice beer is closely associated with religious ceremonies.

XIV.—Trade Combinations.

117. *Extent of organization of—(i) Employers.*—There is no definite organization of employers, other than the Indian Tea Association and its Branches or affiliated associations in the various tea districts. These Associations and Branches are directed towards furthering the interests of, and deal with all problems which arise in connection with, the industry.

There are labour agreements between employers in existence in the various districts, to which the great majority of the estates are signatories. These agreements are designed to prevent enticement of labour and operate by penalizing the employer only; in no case is any penalty incurred by the labourer.

(ii) *Employed.*—There is no organization representing the employed on tea estates, as it is the established custom for the worker to represent his grievances to the manager.

XV.—Industrial Disputes.

123. *Extent of strikes and lockouts.*—The strike and lockout as understood in industrial countries are unknown. Occasionally the workers on the gardens refuse to work if the tasks are larger than they should be but a strike seldom lasts more than a day or so, and is generally amicably settled. This does not of course refer to the strikes which took place a few years ago in Assam, which were the outcome of political propaganda. Having consideration to the large number of people employed on tea estates, the industry has been particularly free from strikes and this is attributed to the tactful and sympathetic handling of their labour forces by the managers. As labour is free to move at will it is necessary for managers to exercise tact.

124. *Conciliation and arbitration machinery.*—There are no conciliation boards existing in the tea districts.

XVI.—Law of Master and Servant.

127. *Effect of repeal of Workmen's Breach of Contract Act, and 128. Types of Contract commonly in use.*—This has had no effect so far as tea gardens labour is concerned. It is still customary on most estates in Assam to pay the usual bonuses which were provided for under Act XIII, but these are not recovered from the labourers. These bonuses are useful for purchasing cattle, and for many other purposes, and are greatly appreciated by the labourer, so much so that it was considered inadvisable to withdraw the concession when the enactment was repealed.

129. *Extent to which (i) Civil, (ii) Criminal Law is available and used for enforcement.*—Nil.

132. *Employers and Workmen's Disputes Act: Is it used?*—No.

The following Abstract shows the progress of recruitment from 1st September, 1928, to 31st August, 1929.

Detailed particulars are given below.

| | Season 1928-29. | | | Season 1927-28. | | |
|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | Sardars con- signed. | Coolies recruited. | | Sardars con- signed. | Coolies recruited. | |
| | | Souls. | Adults. | | Souls. | Adults. |
| Assam .. | 30,474 | 59,684 | 49,568 | 25,867 | 35,662 | 30,008 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Cachar .. | 1,420 | 2,562 | 2,064 | 1,314 | 2,046 | 1,712 |
| Sylhet .. | 3,782 | 10,709 | 8,296 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 2,946 | 4,387 | 3,665 |
| Chittagong .. | 87 | 112 | 95 | 82 | 33 | 27 |
| Dooars .. | — | 32,260 | 27,616 | — | 29,871 | 26,038 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Total .. | | 1,05,327 | 87,639 $\frac{1}{2}$ | | 71,999 | 61,451 |

The following table shows the number of short-term labourers (one year or under) sent to Assam, Cachar and Sylhet included in the above Abstract :—

| Agencies. | Assam. | Cachar. | Sylhet. |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------|-------------------|
| | Adults | Adults. | Adults. |
| Bombay | 9 | — | 5 |
| Ranchi | 8,852 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 5 | 181 |
| Cuttack | 5 | — | — |
| Bihar | 633 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 3 | 69 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| United Provinces .. | — | — | 13 |
| Total | 9,500 | 8 | 268 $\frac{1}{2}$ |

The following table shows the number of short-term labourers (less than one year) sent to Dooars estates included in the above Abstract.

| Agencies. | Adults. |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Lohardugga | 206 |
| Dumka | 720 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| United Provinces | 162 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Total | 1,089 |

SEASON 1928-29 UP TO 31st AUGUST, 1929 (EXCLUDING CHITTAGONG).

| Agencies. | Season 1928-29. | | | | | Season 1927-28. |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| | Sardars received during the Season 1928-29. | Last two Seasons Sardars reported. | Returned to Gardens. | Total Current Sardars. | Last two Seasons Sardars not reported. | Number of Sardars received. |
| Bilaspur .. | 2,320 | 162 | 1,603 | 879 | 633 | 1,628 |
| Raipur .. | 1,529 | 135 | 1,098 | 566 | 942 | 1,588 |
| Chanda .. | 527 | 73 | 249 | 351 | 896 | 914 |
| Bombay .. | 643 | 51 | 513 | 181 | 145 | 568 |
| Sambalpore .. | 6,601 | 456 | 4,199 | 2,858 | 4,237 | 4,805 |
| Jubbulpore .. | 1,721 | 72 | 1,383 | 410 | 452 | 1,131 |
| Ranchi .. | 5,103 | 259 | 3,829 | 1,533 | 1,192 | 3,341 |
| Palamau .. | 897 | 54 | 672 | 279 | 214 | 619 |
| Hazaribagh .. | 396 | 16 | 377 | 35 | 27 | 326 |
| Singbham .. | 1,396 | 78 | 1,123 | 351 | 419 | 1,246 |
| Manbhol .. | 422 | 19 | 373 | 68 | 49 | 519 |
| Ganjam .. | 2,642 | 262 | 1,650 | 1,254 | 3,969 | 3,759 |
| Waltair .. | 1,147 | 57 | 881 | 323 | 644 | 1,216 |
| Koraput .. | 2,635 | 355 | 1,344 | 1,646 | 1,557 | 1,876 |
| Cuttack .. | 900 | 46 | 742 | 204 | 366 | 1,054 |
| Midnapore .. | 457 | 41 | 418 | 80 | 153 | 688 |
| Bihar .. | 2,807 | 439 | 1,782 | 1,464 | 855 | 2,015 |
| United Provinces | 2,001 | 124 | 1,709 | 416 | 338 | 1,534 |
| Angul .. | 1,221 | 59 | 943 | 337 | 250 | 1,007 |
| Cuddapah .. | 163 | 11 | 120 | 54 | 64 | 132 |
| Guntoor .. | 148 | 11 | 88 | 71 | 63 | 161 |
| Total .. | 35,676 | 2,780 | 25,096 | 13,360 | 17,465 | 30,127 |
| Of the above from : | | | | | | |
| Assam .. | 30,474 | 2,469 | 20,862 | 12,081 | 16,032 | 25,867 |
| Cachar .. | 1,420 | 84 | 1,141 | 363 | 363 | 1,314 |
| Sylhet .. | 3,782 | 227 | 3,093 | 916 | 1,070 | 2,946 |

EMIGRANTS.

Coolies Recruited.

Season 1928-29.

Season 1297-28.

| Agencies. | Assam. | | | | | | Assam. | | | | | | Assam. | | | | | |
|------------|--------|---------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------|
| | Assam. | | Cachar. | | Sylhet. | | Assam. | | Cachar. | | Assam. | | Cachar. | | Sylhet. | | Sylhet. | |
| | Souls. | Adults. | Souls. | Adults. | Souls. | Adults. | Souls. | Adults. | Souls. | Adults. | Souls. | Adults. | Souls. | Adults. | Souls. | Adults. | Souls. | Adults. |
| Bilaspur | 4,513 | 3,974 ¹ | 82 | 71 | 74 | 66 | 1,801 | 1,585 | 101 | 92 | 66 | 57 | 57 | 4 | 94 | 77 ¹ | 77 ¹ | |
| Raipur | 1,445 | 1,244 ¹ | 14 | 10 ¹ | 92 | 83 | 1,503 | 1,307 | 4 | 4 | 94 | 94 | 16 | 16 | 13 ¹ | 13 ¹ | 13 ¹ | |
| Chanda | 284 | 240 ¹ | — | — | 97 | 93 ¹ | 1,036 | 883 ¹ | — | — | 289 | 191 | 31 ¹ | 31 ¹ | 191 | 191 | 144 ¹ | |
| Bombay | 2,195 | 1,629 ¹ | 208 | 150 ¹ | 452 | 329 | 2,598 | 1,950 | 385 | 43 | 95 | 95 | 212 | 212 | 185 | 185 | 185 | |
| Sambalpore | 10,621 | 8,989 | 40 | 33 ¹ | 284 | 243 | 4,819 | 4,102 | 269 | 228 ¹ | 228 ¹ | 228 ¹ | 169 | 169 | 142 | 142 | 142 | |
| Jubbulpore | 3,062 | 2,479 ¹ | 559 | 456 ¹ | 1,195 | 967 ¹ | 1,296 | 1,137 ¹ | 22 | 18 ¹ | 18 ¹ | 18 ¹ | 126 | 126 | 121 | 121 | 121 | |
| Ranchi | 17,205 | 13,690 ¹ | 40 | 35 | 637 | 471 ¹ | 6,132 | 4,996 ¹ | 724 | 599 ¹ | 14 | 14 | 12 | 12 | 15 | 15 | 12 ¹ | |
| Palamu | 1,262 | 1,045 ¹ | 4 | 3 | 127 | 107 | 724 | 599 ¹ | 212 | 159 | 9 | 9 | 6 ¹ | 6 ¹ | 8 | 8 | 5 | |
| Hazaribagh | 367 | 291 | 24 | 17 ¹ | 69 | 54 ¹ | 30 | 1,077 | 904 | 1,077 | 904 | 1,077 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 11 | |
| Singhbhum | 1,881 | 1,584 ¹ | 26 | 15 ¹ | 39 | 30 | 213 | 181 ¹ | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 23 | 23 | 19 ¹ | 19 ¹ | 19 ¹ | |
| Manbhum | 167 | 135 | 15 | 13 ¹ | 3 | 2 | 185 ¹ | 152 ¹ | 76 | 67 ¹ | 76 | 76 | 41 ¹ | 41 ¹ | 184 | 184 | 138 ¹ | |
| Ganjam | 1,561 | 1,292 | 7 | 5 ¹ | 119 | 119 | 1,852 | 1,525 ¹ | 780 | 673 | 673 | 673 | 195 | 195 | 156 | 156 | 156 | |
| Waltair | 757 | 664 | 69 | 63 | 265 | 216 ¹ | 216 ¹ | 2,810 | 2,497 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 5 ¹ | 5 ¹ | |
| Koraput | 4,574 | 4,146 ¹ | 13 | 11 | 1 | 1 | 84 ¹ | 55 ¹ | 483 ¹ | 483 ¹ | 69 | 69 | 102 | 102 | 94 | 94 | 94 | |
| Cuttuck | 596 | 523 ¹ | 115 | 101 ¹ | 92 | 84 ¹ | 295 | 240 ¹ | 295 | 240 ¹ | 8 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 25 | 25 | 18 ¹ | |
| Midnapore | 276 | 214 ¹ | 17 | 13 | 20 | 17 ¹ | 329 ¹ | 5,341 | 4,512 ¹ | 5,341 | 4,512 ¹ | 530 | 463 ¹ | 413 | 413 | 337 | 337 | |
| Bihar | 4,788 | 4,059 | 351 | 298 ¹ | 387 | 329 ¹ | 6,506 | 4,890 ¹ | 1,551 | 1,362 ¹ | 1,362 ¹ | 1,362 ¹ | 306 | 263 ¹ | 2,337 | 2,337 | 1,972 ¹ | |
| U.P. | 2,808 | 2,210 | 870 | 671 | 106 | 91 | 441 | 395 ¹ | 303 | 236 ¹ | 236 ¹ | 236 ¹ | 10 ¹ | 10 ¹ | 69 | 69 | 58 | |
| Angul | 882 | 784 ¹ | 13 | 13 | 31 | 28 ¹ | 75 | 71 ¹ | 323 | 276 ¹ | 276 ¹ | 276 ¹ | 41 | 36 | 4 | 4 | 4 | |
| Cuddapah | 259 | 203 ¹ | 66 | 57 | 75 | 75 | 167 | 167 | 167 | 167 | 167 | 167 | 36 | 36 | 28 | 28 | 28 | |
| Guntur | 181 | 167 | 29 | 22 ¹ | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | |
| Total | .. | 59,684 | 49,568 | 2,562 | 2,064 | 10,709 | 8,296 ¹ | 35,662 | 30,008 ¹ | 2,046 | 1,712 | 1,712 | 4,387 | 3,665 | 3,665 | 3,665 | 3,665 | |

DOOARS RECRUITING.

| Agencies. | Season 1928-29. | | Season 1927-28. | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
| | Coolies recruited. | | Coolies recruited. | |
| | Souls. | Adults. | Souls. | Adults. |
| Bilaspur and Raipur | 667 | 596½ | 394 | 354½ |
| Ranchi | 3,034 | 2,436½ | 1,414 | 1,178 |
| Lohardugga | 20,955 | 18,047 | 12,880 | 11,536 |
| Singhboom | 998 | 849 | 444 | 392 |
| Dumka | 1,238 | 1,143 | 3,081 | 2,935½ |
| Katikund | 938 | 759½ | } 5,228 | 4,381 |
| Amrapara | 1,121 | 898 | | |
| Simultollah | 437 | 348 | 505 | 410 |
| Barharwah | 762 | 523 | 3,674 | 2,847½ |
| Vizianagram | 1,920 | 1,762½ | 2,045 | 1,823½ |
| Cuddapah | 8 | 6½ | — | — |
| Guntoor | 1 | 1 | 12 | 12 |
| United Provinces | 190 | 181 | 116 | 108 |
| Hazaribagh | 3 | 2 | 6 | 6 |
| Palamau | 33 | 19½ | 64 | 46½ |
| Ganjam | 45 | 43 | 8 | 8 |
| Total | 32,260 | 27,616 | 29,871 | 26,038½ |

COOLIES RECRUITED FROM CHOTA NAGPUR AGENCIES.

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY, DARJEELING PLANTERS ASSOCIATION, TO THE SECRETARY TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA, CAMP, DELHI, dated the 30th October, 1929.

With reference to the memorandum submitted by the Indian Tea Association to the Royal Commission on behalf of the Tea Industry in Northern India, I have to advise you that a draft of this memorandum was submitted to this Association for approval, and whilst approving generally of the memorandum as submitted, the committee of this Association pointed out that conditions in this district are somewhat different to other districts, and it was felt that the views of this Association should be incorporated in the memorandum as an annexure.

ANNEXURE.

I.—Recruitment.

The whole of the labour employed on tea estates in the Hill District of Darjeeling is Nepalese, immigrants or descendants of immigrants within the last 80 years or so from the neighbouring country of Nepal. The vast majority of the present workers were born on the tea estates of this district, and may be regarded as a permanently settled population, engaged in a hereditary and congenial occupation. No organized recruitment in Nepal for employment in this district is now permitted by the Nepal Durbar; and any fresh additions to the labour force employed in tea, for many years past, have consisted of quite voluntary immigrants from Nepal or Sikkim, generally relations of those already in tea; and such additions form a very small percentage of the numbers employed, which are really kept up by the natural reproduction of the settled labourers.

4. As practically all immigration from Nepal has been by complete families, there has been no disturbance of family life; and families have settled complete on a tea estate, and there multiplied and prospered, and in many cases have been subsequently joined by other families and relations from the same village in Nepal.

Although the Nepal Durbar is opposed to further emigration from that country, there is still a certain drift (especially in seasons of scarcity) into the Darjeeling district for work on tea estates—and this may be taken to indicate that conditions of life on the latter are considered preferable to those in their native villages. Families once settled in tea very rarely return to Nepal. There is a certain amount of movement from garden to garden within the district, generally for purely personal reasons, to join relatives on another estate, or because it is thought that climate and altitude may be more suitable, to escape a debt, or to obtain a fresh advance of money; but such movements from garden to garden are now appreciably less than 20 years ago.

8. There is little casual employment on tea estates. A few labourers may come in from neighbouring villages for temporary work, but the proportion of such casual labour is probably never as much as 10 per cent. of the labour permanently employed.

II.—Staff Organization.

11. *Selection of Managing Staff.*—It is noted that the General Committee of the Indian Tea Association, Calcutta, intend themselves to deal with this point. It may be mentioned that of the 86 tea estates which are members of the Darjeeling Planters Association (practically the whole of the tea concerns in the district) approximately 9 per cent. are owned and managed by Indians. Of the remaining 91 per cent. the great majority are owned by companies, and controlled either by managing agents in Calcutta or by boards of directors in London; but there are a few privately-owned estates controlled directly by their proprietors, and in some cases also managed by the latter.

12. The subordinate supervising staff may be said to be composed of (a) "duffadars," or foremen of gangs; (b) "chuprassies" or supervisors of several gangs or a section of work; (c) "munshis" or "jamadars," or supervisors of the whole outdoor work, or at any rate of several sections; (d) native assistants, generally in charge of outlying divisions of an estate; (e) head tea-makers, or tea-house sirdars, in direct charge of work within the tea factory. There is no separate system of recruitment of the above. Duffadars are selected from workers who show intelligence, trustworthiness, or influence over others.

Chuprassies are generally promoted from competent duffadars, who have some vernacular education and technical knowledge.

Munshis are also generally appointed from selected experienced men and require to have some literacy, as well as character, influence and power of handling labour.

Native assistants are men of such better education (generally English speaking), and are sometimes selected from those with clerical training and experience.

It may be said that actual experience and proved intelligence in actual work on tea estates is the main recommendation for promotion.

13. Relations generally are very satisfactory. Many of the subordinate supervisors have members of their own families, or their relations, or those of their own caste, working directly under them. No rigid or irksome discipline is enforced, and quarrels between supervisors and workers are rare. Cases of dispute between the employees over religious or caste matters, or personal quarrels (generally over family affairs) are heard and settled by the manager often with the assistance of a Panchayat or small committee of influential men. Similarly the manager and assistants are generally on very good terms with their subordinates and the workers. While a reasonably good standard of work must be insisted upon, this is generally done with tact and discretion, and allowances are made for inexperience and individual deficiencies. On estates with an experienced and competent staff and a well-settled labour force, relations between the two may be fairly said to leave little to be desired. Where troubles have occasionally arisen (and of late years these have been rare in this district) they can almost always be attributed to injudicious handling by inexperienced staff, or to workers having been previously spoilt by slovenly management, or to interference by interested agitators.

(ii) Works committees are not known in this district, nor are they required. It must be remembered that the whole of the labour force is free to move elsewhere whenever they desire, and no manager can afford by unreasonable methods to cause an exodus of his labour.

15. There is little work given on contract on tea estates, almost all the normal work being carried out by permanently settled workers under the direct supervision of the manager. Piecework is very general, and is sometimes loosely referred to as "contract" work, but this is carried out by the settled garden labour (with occasional casual additions from outside) under the permanent staff, and is not contract work, as usually meant by that term. Contracts are only made for special works, such as erection of factories or other buildings, and carriage of heavy materials, machinery, or firewood, etc., and are generally carried out with casual labour not belonging to any estate, and are of a temporary nature. There is practically no sub-contracting in such cases. The conditions under which such contract work is carried out do not differ from those of ordinary labour in the district, and no special control is required, nor are there any special effects to be noted.

III.—Housing.

Houses are provided and maintained for all labour on tea estates by the employers, free of all cost to the employees. In this district the nature of the houses varies, some being stone-built with iron roofs, some of timber or iron frame with thatch or matting roofs, and some of iron frame with iron roofs, and lath-and-plaster walls. Some of the employees prefer one type, some another. It is remarked that the last type mentioned above appears to be becoming the most popular. These have the advantage that the walls are easily renewable, when desired; also that the houses can be moved to a fresh site if necessary, and re-erected.

It may be said that all housing is at least as good, generally better, than that of similar cultivators in Nepal or in the non-tea area of the district; and the standard has generally improved steadily of late years. Nearly all houses have verandahs attached, which are much appreciated. As far as possible houses are provided varying in size to suit the numbers of the family occupying them.

Accommodation is made available for all permanent workers, and is fully utilized by them. There are no rents paid by permanent workers. No special problems arise in this connection.

IV.—Health.

Figures of mortality and birth rate, etc., are reported weekly by all tea estates to local police Thanas, and will be obtainable from the Deputy Commissioner's office. Working conditions may be said to be ideal for an agricultural people as regards field work on gardens, while work inside factories (in which less than 10 per cent. of the labour force are employed) is well-organized and by no means arduous.

The labour force is generally well fed, their staple food stuffs being makai (or maize), rice and vegetables. The increase in cost of these in recent years has been more than counterbalanced by the increase in earnings. In times of scarcity and dearness, most estates have arranged for imported supplies for their labourers, and distributed them at a less than cost price.

24. Most estates have now their own hospitals and Doctor Babus, and there is a district medical association maintained entirely by tea estates which employs two

British doctors who supervise the work on gardens. The services of the civil surgeons of Darjeeling and Kurseong are available for advice as regards larger measures of disease prevention, and the hospitals at Darjeeling and Kurseong deal with serious cases from tea estates. Within recent years an anti-hookworm campaign has done much to counteract this prevalent disease. Vaccination is well maintained.

Medical facilities on gardens are thus considerably in advance of those available in other agricultural areas of the province.

25. A considerable improvement is noticeable in the easiness with which tea garden employees now avail themselves of medical relief of all kinds; and this applies also to the women, who in the case of the Nepalese are less difficult of approach than most Indian races in this respect.

26. Sanitation is backward, owing to the conservatism of the labourer, but improvement is being steadily made, and latrine arrangements are gradually coming into more effective use. Water supplies are well looked after, and piped systems are being extended.

28. The existing factories rules are suitable, and provide all the safeguards that are required for the simple working of tea factories.

Control of temperature is not required in this temperate climate.

29. There are no industrial diseases connected with tea production.

31. It is usual on tea estates to give a bonus of Rs. 5 to the mother on birth of a child, with a further bonus when the child is one year old, and sometimes also at two years of age, etc., if the child is in good health and condition. Mothers are given light work before and after child-birth, and while absent for this cause are given full pay. When required, milk, etc., is provided by the estate. Medical attendance is available either at hospital or at home; but there is still difficulty in overcoming conservative prejudices and primitive methods regarding child-birth.

V.—Welfare.

Welfare officers and workers are not employed or required on tea estates, where the manager is in direct and close touch with the general conditions of his labour force.

There are primary schools on or near most estates, generally under the control of the Scots Mission, and these provide for as much educational facilities as seem to be required at present. Compulsory primary education is not considered to be a practical proposition as yet.

IX.—Hours.

In the plucking season (April to November) about eight hours per day are actually worked, i.e., from 7.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., with an hour's rest at mid-day.

In the non-plucking season, when field work consists chiefly in pruning and cultivation, the day's work can usually be completed in about six hours, exclusive of a mid-day rest—and the workers have generally all finished and gone home by about 3 p.m. Where labour is sufficient for the working of the garden there is little or no overtime done, but where labour is short of requirements, inducement is offered to work overtime, always at a higher rate than the normal, and within reasonable limits. One day a week is a complete holiday (usually Sunday); and it is only rarely, during periods of very rapid growth of leaf, that any field work is done on this holiday. The workers often voluntarily take another day or two off work during the week, when their earnings are sufficient to keep them comfortably without working the full week of six days.

There is little hard and fast regulation about hours and days of working, and the labour force has a good deal of latitude. It is considered that any official regulation of hours would be quite unnecessary, undesirable, and very difficult to put into practice, as with all agricultural employment.

XII.—Wages.

As is usual in India, the family, and not the single worker only is the bread-winner. Regular employment is afforded to men, women, and children on all tea estates. As the supply of labour is hardly equal to the demand there is no unemployment. It is impossible to state exact figures of wages and earnings, as these vary to some extent on different estates and in different parts of the district, in accordance with local conditions and customs.

In August, 1928, an attempt was made to compute the average money wage earnable by workers in tea estates, and it was calculated that the minimum average wage of ordinary workers would be about: men, 7 As.-6 pies per day; women, 6 As.; children, 2 As.-9 pies. Most workers would if industrious easily earn more than the above; since throughout the plucking season, extra "Leaf-pice" is given

for plucking more than a standard quantity of leaf per day, and the standard is varied with the amount of leaf easily available, so that good workers can easily earn double (or more) the daily wage. Much work is done on the "piece-work" system, throughout the year, and it is quite usual for good workers to earn a rupee or more per day. In addition to the money wage, all workers are housed entirely free of charge; on nearly all estates plots of garden land are allotted to families free of charge, on which they cultivate "makai" (or maize, the staple food-grain) and vegetables, some of which are sold in the bazaars by the labourers. These garden plots are much appreciated by our Nepalese labour, who are all keen cultivators. Poultry, goats, pigs, and cattle are often kept by the workers, and are a source of considerable income.

Free supplies of firewood are made available to all. On some estates clothing is given periodically; but it is generally found better for the labourers to provide their own clothes, for which their earnings are adequate. The people are generally well-clothed, and ornaments of considerable value are worn by the women. There is noticeably less rough home-spun cloth used, and more imported substantial materials.

It is the general practice to give bonuses of different kinds, e.g., for child-birth and maintenance of babies, as mentioned above; for an unbroken week's work of six days, etc. Orphan children are maintained till old enough for work, and aged and disabled workers are provided for. Advances are constantly given for expenses of weddings, funerals, and other festivals, free of interest, to be recovered by small instalment from subsequent earnings.

It is estimated that the average earnings of tea labour at the present time are about double those of 15 years ago—while the cost of living has increased by considerably less than that ratio. The supply of labour is approximately the same as it was some 15 years ago, and (as previously stated) is somewhat less than the demand—almost all gardens would willingly employ more settled labour than they now have. The tea industry in this district employing a force free to come and go as it pleases, has to compete to an increasing degree against the attractions offered to its labour by outside employers in the district, and even at times against organized recruitment for far-distant jobs which are generally wholly unsuitable for hill-bred labourers.

105. It is considered that the statutory fixing of minimum wages is in these conditions unnecessary and inadvisable.

106. Fining of labourers is rare, and is only done by the manager personally. It is only resorted to as a punishment in cases of deliberate damage to property, e.g., for felling and stealing forest trees, or for serious breaches of discipline or good order.

Proceeds of fines are generally used for the benefit of the labourer generally, such as for sports or entertainments.

107. Wages (except for subordinate staff) are generally on a daily rate, and payments are made weekly. The period elapsing before payment of wages earned varies from 2 days to about 10 days. It is considered that legislation in this connection is quite unnecessary.

Unclaimed wages are practically unknown.

108. The Nepalese labourer is very prone to run into debt. Efforts to counteract the evil effects of this are constant, and good results have accrued from the system of prompt payments of wages; the daily, as against the weekly or monthly, rate which is more readily understood and checked; the system of advances (without interest) by estates (rather than by bazaar lenders) for customary requirements, the restriction of such advances in amount, the insistence upon gradual repayment and prevention escape from such debts by absconding from garden to garden.

109. Bonus and profit-sharing arrangements are generally only in use as regards the more important of the subordinate staff, such as native assistants, munshis, or head tea-makers. They would not be practicable or understandable to the labour force generally.

110. Leave is only taken to a small extent by the workers individually, but is freely allowed whenever it seems to be desired for adequate reasons. There are certain poojahs or general holidays in the year, when work on tea estates is suspended entirely.

XIII.—Industrial Efficiency of Workers.

112 to 115. It is difficult to estimate any changes in efficiency of the workers generally in recent years.

General health is certainly better, owing to measures of disease-prevention, increased expenditure on medical facilities, and a readier recourse to these by workers.

Physique shows little change, except that the women appear to be generally more robust. Education has spread, but many garden-bred men after acquiring some education, leave the tea gardens for better paid employment outside. Standards of living seem to be slowly but steadily rising, and the workers are generally less primitive in their ideas and habits. There is no excessive use of alcoholic drink generally ; but on holidays and festivals there is a good deal of convivial drinking.

116. It is considered that the only practical method of obtaining increased efficiency of the labour force is by :—(a) Further measures for disease prevention, and reduction of temporary sickness. (b) Improvement of water supplies, sanitation, and ventilation of houses. The two latter are chiefly a matter of the gradual education of the people in hygiene—towards which the constant efforts of the medical establishment are directed. (c) Cultivation of a higher standard of efficiency and trustworthiness in the subordinate staff.

XIV.—Trade Combinations.

There is a Darjeeling Planters' Association, of which practically every tea estate in this district is a member. There is a labour agreement of which the great majority of estates are signatories. This is a simple agreement designed to prevent undue competition between estates to secure labourers and to regulate matters arising on the movement of labourers from one estate to another. There is no recognized organization or union of tea estates employees.

V.—Industrial Disputes.

Industrial disputes are fortunately almost unknown in this district. If there is an occasional strike, it is almost always confined to a single estate, and is due to purely local and temporary causes, and is generally very quickly adjusted.

The only approach to any general unrest among the labourers in our district during recent years was in 1921, when paid agitators were sent by the Non-co-operation Organization in Bengal, with the specific object of stirring up the workers in tea against the managers and proprietors. In spite of very wide-spread and energetic propaganda by agitators on almost all tea gardens, and in spite of the pathetic gullibility of the labourers, the surprising inertia of the Government, in face of a seriously threatened outbreak of disorder in a particularly law-abiding district, little effective result was achieved, thanks to the loyalty and good sense of the great majority of the tea garden labourers, and to the influence and tact of the managers in charge. This attempt collapsed completely as soon as the Government permitted adequate measures to be put in force against the disturbers of the peace.

In conclusion my committee venture to think that the conditions under which tea garden labour is now employed in this district compare very favourably, as regards earnings, housing, medical and sanitary measures, elementary education, and general welfare, with those of any agricultural labour in any part of India, they consider that where (as in our case) the continued prosperity and even the existence of the industry is entirely dependent upon the maintenance of a contented and sufficient labour force, and where that labour force is entirely free to work or to move elsewhere as it chooses, there can be little justification for official or legislative interference with the conditions under which that labour lives, and that more harm than benefit to the labourers as a whole is likely to ensue from any such interference with the close personal touch and friendly relations which have always existed between the Darjeeling Planters and their excellent labour.

THE TERAI PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON INDIAN LABOUR—PER FAVOUR OF THE INDIAN TEA ASSOCIATION.

Dated Lohaghur, Panighata, P.O., the 4th November, 1929.

The members of my Association desire to associate themselves with the statement submitted by the Indian Tea Association, Calcutta.

Conditions in the Terai with regard to labour and recruiting are practically the same as those in the Dooars.

The few gardens on the foothills employing Nepali labour may be classed in the same category as those which are included in the statement submitted by the Darjeeling Planters' Association.

Mr. W. L. TRAVERS, C.I.E., O.B.E., M.L.C., BARADIGHI TEA ESTATE, JALPAIGURI.

Tea Garden Labour in the Dooars.

Before that terrible scourge, the influenza epidemic of 1918 and 1919, struck India, the labourers on the tea gardens of the Dooars hailed from Chota Nagpur, from the Santhal Parganas and from Chaibassa, with a large contingent of Nepali people, who came chiefly from the borders of Bhutan and Darjeeling.

But the influenza took so heavy a toll of the people in Chota Nagpur that the Dooars planter was obliged for a while to go further afield and to recruit some Madrassies and a few others. These are not very numerous in proportion even now, and the majority of the labourers are families of the Oraon, Munda, Kharia, and Santal races from the provinces of Bihar and Orissa. There are some of what one might call the semi-Hindooizee castes of the same districts, Lohas and the like, and perhaps 30,000 to 40,000 Nepalis. Apart from Assam, there are probably 300,000 workers and dependants upon the tea gardens of North Bengal, in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling.

The large majority of the people are agricultural. That is to say, they are employed upon work in the fields. The men hoe the land and drain it, and the women pluck the leaf from the bushes which becomes the crop. A small percentage, about one-tenth of the working force, is employed in the factory, in changing the raw green leaf into the black tea which is packed into the box.

Before discussing the life of a tea garden labourer, there is one marked difference between that life and the introduction to the life and conditions in other industries, to which attention should first be drawn. For our labourer not only lives and has his being upon a large estate belonging to his employer, but he is conveyed and brought to that estate, in the initiative, from his home district right to his work, at no cost to himself at all. For this important purpose of recruiting the tea industry maintains a large and widely extended organization. There is an agent, whose special job it is, in every district where there is a surplus population, to recruit those willing to work with their hands, and to emigrate, perhaps only for a year though it may be longer.

The system is called "Sardaree Recruiting" and it is entirely upon a voluntary basis. A sardar or a recruiter leaves the estate with credentials, and journeys to his native district and village. There, where the population presses hardly upon the land and the people are poor, the sardar tells his relations and friends of the wages, and life and conditions upon the tea garden. Everything is discussed in detail which would surprise his manager, the Saeb. You may be sure that his idiosyncrasies and personality, from the point of view of his labourers, are discussed in many villages. There are probably a number of recruiters from different estates and districts. The younger people, those whom the land cannot support, listen to the accounts of the new life which is to be theirs, and finally they decide to accompany some recruiter, generally a relation or connection, to Assam or to Bhutan, as they still call the Dooars. They are taken to a depot where the agent of the recruiting organization sees them and enquires. No married girl or woman is accepted unless her husband is with her. No minor is accepted unless it is certain that his parents approve, and a full register is kept for inspection by officers of Government. All care is taken and then the recruit is given a money bonus, clothes, and a little outfit. He is placed in charge of a peon, constantly thus employed, who takes a little squad of recruits right through to the garden, seeing that his charges are fed and looked after on the way. The recruit arrives and is given more money to keep him until he earns; he is given a house and finds himself generally amongst relations and friends who have been on the estate for some time. Thus our new labourer begins the tea garden life, fair and square, with no debt, unless indeed he has applied to the agent, and been given money in his country to pay a Mahajan or to leave with his people. A labourer can, if he wills, and many do, send money to his parents, almost immediately. Lacs of rupees, many lacs, are sent from the tea districts to Chota Nagpur and other recruiting districts every year. The money is sent to pay the rent of the ancestral plot of land, to pay the money-leader of the village, for the family support, or for marriage of brothers—for a thousand purposes it aids the family and the villages from whence comes the tea garden coolie.

The whole of this recruiting system for tea gardens is under the inspection and supervision of Government, under rules and regulations, watched by the provincial administrations. For the Dooars there are a few regulations, though even to there recruiting is now supervised. There were none, because the Dooars tea garden labourer has always been free and under no contract or agreement. In Assam there used to be an agreement for work, but now that has been eliminated too. Indeed the Linlithgow Commission expressed the opinion that restrictions upon tea garden

recruiting in the movement of labour should be done away with altogether. No other industry is thus handicapped, and officers of the Government of Assam and of Bengal inspect gardens and see that the labourers receive good treatment. Besides, the people are free to come and to go, and competition insures that treatment.

But the tea industry itself desires a measure of supervision of recruiting. To prevent abuses, to prevent enticement, it wishes to have simple, clear regulations by which it can itself supervise, in co-operation and consultation with the Governments of the provinces from which come its labourers. The tea industry knows full well that clean recruiting is a great asset. With its employees well treated as they are in the gardens, free to come and to go to their homes if they desire, the men who run the industry know that they can always obtain a sufficiency of labour. But irksome, expensive regulations harm both employer and the employed. What is required is a Board with representatives of each Government concerned, to sit with the nominees of the industry, and thus to manage this great recruiting organization of a great industry. The Government officers, each from his province, would watch the interests of the labourer, and the industry itself would pay their salaries. But what the industry does not desire is the inclusion of politicians or outsiders, who know nothing or little of the industry, and who would interfere in what is entirely a willing and voluntary movement of free labour, too poor to pay for transport to a distant field of work. It should not be forgotten that the tea industry is a great asset to the provinces from which its labourers are drawn, and that not only in the continuous stream of rupees which the people send. For in times of famine and scarcity, thousands and thousands of people go off to the gardens, far more than they require for their actual work. The coolies in the estate clamour for permission to go: "My relations are hungry, Sahib, do let me bring them here." The tea managers' labourers are *his* people—he feels that he must provide. And when there is real famine the poor recruits cannot do much work, often for weeks. They have to regain their strength and health. Thus is Government relieved of much expenditure and the people gain. For after a while, when prosperity returns in their home village, they return and not empty handed.

Next for the labourer's life in the tea garden itself.

The labourer and his wife (like anyone else he is not much good without her) are generally happy and contented persons. Their earnings are ample and good. They suffice for twice the food that was consumed in their country. Plenty of clothes and household goods and chattels; cows, goats, and fowls are bought. If thrifty, the labourer and his wife can quickly buy jewellery, and three or four years' savings will be enough for purchase of land. Many, many thousands have settled as ryots in Assam and in the Dooars. They still like to be near a garden so that the children can work there. And the children swarm with a huge birth-rate. On the estate the labourer is housed free. He has a convenient and excellent water supply, and firewood for the gathering and fetching. If sick, he is paid until he is well, and often his wife is paid too to attend upon him. There is a hospital for serious cases, with an Indian doctor, generally qualified, in charge, supervised by a British or Indian medical man of home qualification. The wife receives pay for three months when the periodical baby arrives, and the baby, too, is watched. If the mother be ailing the child is fed properly and supervised.

Then, on many estates, there is land. The householder labourer has a plot of land at a nominal rent and the rice helps the family on its way. Moreover, if he wants money for the marriage of a son, to buy a cow, for a Pooja or for any real want it is advanced to him, free of interest, to be recovered gradually. This is the "Ma Bap" system where the manager cares for his people, knows them well, attends to their wants, and tries his best to keep them happy and contented. He must do so. The garden has to bring its workmen from hundreds of miles away. They will not come naturally unless the life is good. The manager has to provide for the wastage of the force, to replace those who return or go to the bustees. Moreover, if he is not kind and sympathetic, the coolies will quietly arrange to go elsewhere and disappear. Many absconders would bring to the manager the loss of his billet, and perhaps of his livelihood. Thus it is to his own self interest to study the wants and content of his labour force.

But there is much more than self interest. For living years amongst kindly, simple people from Chota Nagpur or elsewhere, the normal British manager or assistant becomes very fond of them. Perhaps, and it often happens, the Sahib lives many years upon one estate. So do many of his labourers. He watches a new generation grow up from childhood to manhood and womanhood. He helps with their marriages and a thousand of their family affairs. Naturally there is affection between the coolie and the Sahib. The hard task-master now-a-days is hardly known in tea. Personality and sympathy count for so much. The good planter generally has a good labour force, unless he is, unhappy man, on one of those estates which have so many disadvantages for the labourer, that even sympathy, justice, and knowledge are outweighed.

To return to the labourer and his life, in a garden. He lives in a village or cluster of houses. His neighbours are relations, connections and friends of his own race. Perhaps they all come from the same village in Chota Nagpur or elsewhere, or from villages not far away. That helps the life. They really know each other. There is a Sirdar or elder to turn to for advice. A house can be left without fear of theft, though this is rare for there is often some old grandfather or dependent, and children, with the cattle and goats grazing not far away. The hours of work are not lengthy. A man hoeing, finishes his task in six hours. Plucking takes longer, but it is easy work, not arduous, with plenty of time for talk and laughter, and extra pay for all the leaf over a fair task. Moreover, the labourer has his amusements—relaxation, shikar ; the dance and the song in the longer evenings ; visiting and seeing his friends and people on other gardens ; the weekly bazaar, a good gathering for gossip and a little business and shopping. The younger boys and men are taking to football, and the occasional touring cinema for the estate is a great delight. A few progressive and large gardens have installed their own cinemas. It pays for the husband who takes his wife to see the pictures on leave day, keeping away from the drink.

The Chota Nagpur and Santal races are Animists in religion, and this brings us to one of the managers' greatest difficulties in his health and welfare schemes, for these people are intensely superstitious. Lingering illness, sickness out of the normal (especially pneumonia), the sudden death of the tropics. To them when such a case begins, thought turns not to the doctor and to medicine and treatment, but to the eviction of the evil spirit, that some witch or wizard has brought into the sick one. An "Ojga" may be sent for to discover indeed, who is the witch or wizard, and terrible results sometimes follow. A wave of superstitious fear will also occasionally sweep through a whole country side. It is whispered that evil ones from the west are stealing children. Mothers gather the little ones early to their houses. The men are uneasy and fractious, suspicious of strangers. Woe befalls any stranger who may quite unwittingly enter Munda or Santal lines in the evening at such a time. If he speaks, or laughs to a child he may be attacked, and even killed. Such superstition, interwoven into their whole being, makes the task of the manager difficult and hard when fighting against pestilence and epidemic. It is useless to tell the Orao or the Kharia that there are no evil spirits or "Bhuts." They know better and say amongst themselves that the Sahib is ignorant of this country. Labourers are free. They cannot be dragooned into health and sanitation measures. Patience, tact, sympathy are the only weapons. These and persistency will gradually raise the standard. The health upon many tea gardens, those with an old settled force, is wonderful. The author inspects several such estates in Cachar every year, places where the people have been for generations, and now look upon as their homes. Upon one garden in the past eight years the total death-rate has only once been over 15 per thousand. Generally it is about 12 per thousand—as healthy as an English city. Epidemics are provided for. The water is good, and the only cholera is introduced from bustees outside the garden, with an occasional case from bad fish or food. But now the vaccine soon defeats an epidemic. The great evil still to fight is malaria. Cachar and parts of Assam have little of it. But in parts of the Dooars, and especially the Western Dooars, in some years it takes a distressing toll. Spraying is now being done upon most estates to fight the mosquitoes. An expert has been called in, and has advised, but more is yet required. As it is, each tea district is divided into circles of 10, 12 and 15 gardens under a British medical officer, with an Indian doctor resident on each. The first object should be to obtain qualified Indian doctors for this position trained in the medical school, upon *every* estate. With the increasing number of medical schools, qualified men of this status are now ready and willing to work upon the estates. Secondly the charge of the British doctor is much too large. Five estates are quite sufficient for his supervision. As it is, he is only a consultant. He has not time to advise the manager upon the many health problems which confront him.

He ought to visit with the Indian doctor the whole of the lines of each estate once a week, to work among and get to know the people, just as the staff on the tea-producing and making side do. These many schemes of prevention could be initiated, with a general rise in health. Lastly each tea district of 50 gardens should have a Board of Health, with a qualified scientific research worker to map out general policy, and the special policy in co-operation with each circle's staff. These proposals are what the progressive planter, who loves his people, most earnestly desires. If only the tea industry will return to stable prosperity so that there may be the money available for such schemes of health and welfare and amenities for the labourer, the better will be the health, the more contented and happy be the people, the better the work to be obtained. One looks forward to the time when health is so improved that the large sums of money required for recruiting new labourers will be lessened almost to nothing, for many labourers settle altogether on the tea garden. They have more comfort and amenities than in their home village, and the younger sons and brothers have to make good somewhere away. The land cannot support the increasing population for it is poor.

APPENDIX.

A Short Note upon Primary Education and the Dooars Tea Garden Labourers.

The population of any tea garden in the Dooars contains, as a rule, people not from one, but several, of the races of Chota Nagpur. Upon one estate there will be a number of Oraons, of Mundas, of Kharias, of Santhals, and of other races and semi-Hindoo caste. The Oraon tribe is the largest, and upon a few estates they are in a considerable majority, forming perhaps 90 per cent. of the population. There one of the many difficulties of education is less, but on a great number of gardens the varying proportions of different tribes, speaking a language entirely different, is a serious problem. It is true that all the people learn to speak the lingua franca, more or less, but the real secondary language of the Chota Nagpur peoples is the Gwawali dialect, with a Deva Nagri script, while that of the Santhals is Bengalee.

Two teachers, therefore, are required in many schools—one to teach the Chota Nagpur people and another those who wish to learn Bengalee. Upon gardens to the north a further complication is introduced because upon them the Nepalese are resident, and they have to be considered. And there the number of teachers may be taken to three. It is very difficult to find a suitable teacher. Upon the grant allowed by the educational department it is only possible to secure a Duffadar or headman of the garden, who will teach for three hours or so in the evening as a subsidiary occupation. I have known some of that class to be quite efficient at teaching the three "R's." To secure a man of even moderate efficiency, however, a tea garden has to pay his salary. The whole question of the supply of teachers requires investigation and arrangement. It has been suggested that educated Oraons should be secured from Chota Nagpur.

The aboriginal labourer does not at present approve of the education of his children. In Chota Nagpur the standard of literacy amongst the people is very low, and the percentage would be lower still if it were not for the devoted services to education of the several Missionary Societies and organizations. Even with encouragement from the manager, it is usually only possible to persuade a small proportion of the boys to go to school. An evening school is more successful than the all day school. Parents do not mind the attendance then so much.

On every tea garden under British control there is I believe a small school where the rudiments of primary education are available, boys being taught to read and to write and simple arithmetic. But the whole system now requires overhaul and rearrangement, with a special inspector and a central school to give more advanced education. The Dooars Planters' Association has not advanced the matter, because a draft bill has been before the Bengal Legislative Council. If the bill were enacted there would be a District School Board, and it remains to be seen how the special organization which is required for a backward people, labourers in an agricultural industry, could be created. If the bill, which has been through a council committee comes before the council, I shall bring the matter forward.

INDIAN TEA PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION, JALPAIGURI.

I.—Recruitment.

1. (i) Almost the whole of the labour force in Dooars tea gardens is recruited from Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas excepting only some paharias and a few meches.

(ii) Better earning prospects and congenial nature of work as well as want of sufficient arable lands in their native districts.

(iii) Less recruitment and migration because of gradual development of recruiting districts and availability of local labour from amongst settlers in this part of the district and also perhaps due to decrease of population in the recruiting districts owing to epidemics in 1918. Nowadays more short term (6 monthly and 9 monthly) labourers are available.

2. (i) About 10 per cent. to 20 per cent. of the recruits visit their native provinces once a year and some return, but others (though few) resettle at home.

(ii) Of the labour force employed 70 per cent. to 75 per cent. are permanent dwellers on the estate. Some jat of labourers like to return more frequently to their native places than others.

3. (i) Sardari recruitment (free labour).

(ii) Perhaps propaganda work may improve. But the present system is quite a

(iii) Public employment agencies are unnecessary and are also undesirable as same would smack of indenture and may cause practical difficulties and give rise to distrusts in the mind of the immigrants.

4. Generally families migrate the system in vogue does not cause any disturbance of family life. Under short term system the recruits return after 6 or 9 months to their own family hearth and home.

8. (i) Labour force living on the estate are employed throughout the year.

(ii) 10 per cent. of total labour employed are casual "basti" labourers from neighbouring villages. Some "Nunia" labourers visit periodically for making roads, etc., on contract system and also some Nepalese and Bhutias come down in cold weather for contract work of sawing, thatch cutting, etc.

II.—Staff Organization.

11. The managers and garden officers are appointed from head offices or managing agency offices. Some of the lower grade subordinate staff are appointed from labourers.

12. Competent labourers are employed as headmates or daffadars. Literate and intelligent labourers are promoted to responsible subordinate supervising posts as Baidars, etc.

13. Relation generally is good and cordial.

15. Labourers are never placed under contractors and intermediaries. But contract works are given to outside temporary contractors for such works as cutting of firewood from forests, cutting of thatch grass, etc.

III.—Housing.

Free house accomodation is provided to all the labourers by the employers. Generally one fair sized house accomodation is provided according to the labourers' requirements, a cookshed and a cattle shed to a family are also provided. The houses are on open ground conformably to their habits. No rent charged or taken.

IV.—Health.

23. (i) Figures of mortality. From report on the working of Jalpaiguri Labour Act during 1927-28—22.40 per mille.

(ii) Birth rate 39.73 per mille and infant mortality roughly 80 per 1,000 births.

(iii) Working conditions : (a) At work places—working conditions are good and favourable for labourers. They work freely and when they feel disinclined they do not have to work. A small number work in the factory under factory regulations. (b) At home—they do food crops cultivation and cattle rearing on their own accounts on lands provided free of rent by their employers.

(iv) Rice, pulses, vegetables, occasionally meat and fish in turns at time of high prices. Rice is supplied by the employers at below market rates.

(v) Good.

(vi) No mentionable disturbance of sex ratio in tea garden.

24. (i) Free service of medical officers (doctors permanently employed on tea estates) and free supply of medicines and sick diets are provided. Amongst Indian gardens an Indian Planters' Medical Board has been established and group medical officers recruited from medical graduates (M. B.s) of Universities are placed in charge of a group of 6 to 10 gardens.

25. Freely utilized by the labourers and they are being gradually educated up to come to and stay at garden hospitals when seriously ill.

26. Latrines and urinals are often provided for factory labourers near factories but the labourers do not like to use them. Labourers are averse to use latrines being against their habits and they prefer waste lands for such purposes.

27. No board of health in Duars gardens. Plantations are occasionally inspected by the district civil surgeon.

28. The major portion of work is agricultural. The existing factory rules are difficult to observe owing to aboriginal labourers working there.

(i) No abnormally high temperature in tea factories and so no artificial cooling is necessary. The hot exhaust airs fanned out are often utilised in witherings of tea leaves.

29. *Industrial Diseases*.—Nil.

31. (i) Under existing scheme maternity allowance is given for sometime before and after confinements. The existing system is working well and the labourers are quite happy and contented.

(ii) and (iii) None necessary at all.

V.—Welfare (other than Health, Housing, but including Education).

32. (i) Primary schools are provided in many gardens. Sports and shows on festival times and entertainment by jatras and cinemas are occasionally provided.

(ii) Practically none.

33. There are no special welfare officers other than the garden staff. They help the labourers in their wants and difficulties.

34. (i) Jatra and theatre and bioscope shows are provided occasionally.

(ii) Nil.

35. Some improvement among the workers. They enjoy these very much and they always live a happy contented life with dancings, singings, etc., after the days' workings.

38. *Co-operation.*—The employers often advance moneys to labourers for purchase of carts, buffaloes, etc., free of interest. At times of high prices of food crops and specially during famine years paddy and rice are supplied to them at rates much lower than the market rates.

IX.—Hours.

(c) In factory and for other works five to seven hours. They work on contract work system about 6 hours with 2 hours rest at midday.

(d) Other establishments.

78. The working days are generally six days in the week excepting special festival holidays which are very few. The hours worked per week vary considerably. It depends entirely on the inclination of the respective labourer. Those who work regularly every day, whose number is very very few indeed may work for 36 hours weekly.

79. Working days are generally six days in the week. The hat day being a holiday on special festival occasions, viz.: during Dolepuja time and Durgapuja time there are holidays.

But the average working day of the labourer may be said to be only three days.

80. Not desirable. As any regulations for compulsory work may be attended with great difficulties and troubles.

XII.—Wages.

96. A good working adult male labour earns from 12 annas to Rs. 1 and sometimes even Rs. 1-4 annas to Rs. 1-8 annas. A good working adult female earns from 9 annas to 12 annas during off season and from 15 annas to Rs. 2-4 annas during plucking season. Good working children labourers earn from 4 annas to 6 annas per diem.

The rates of work (haziri) are on piece work or rather contract work system, viz. so much amount of work for the first haziri so much for second haziri and so on. The amount of piece-work to be done for the second and third and fourth and fifth are smaller and smaller from the respective previous one. The rate of payment for each haziri is 4 annas for a male, 3 annas for a female and As. 1-6 pies for each of the children.

97. No special movements in tea areas are perceptible, but rate of work of each haziri have come down much lower owing to competition of haziri work rates in neighbouring gardens. In some gardens where the labourers are very short, 5, 6 even 7 haziries are allowed daily to working labourer to attract more labour from neighbouring bustees and neighbouring gardens.

98. Amount should be considerable. It is not possible to ascertain this. But when a labourer returns home after a few years' stay and work, he takes a good deal of money with him.

99. No wages are paid in kind. But many free gifts such as free housing, free water, free firewood, free medical attendance and medicines, free advances, free grazing and agricultural lands have to be paid which really go a great way in helping them to be well provided.

101. (i) No agreement with the labourers but the system of rate of work in vogue in each subdistrict is generally followed by all.

(ii) The rates of haziri works are fixed by manager giving due consideration to the system in vogue in the neighbourhood.

103. Throughout the Duars and Terai a standard rate is fixed with the quality of work to be done with the approval of the several Planters' Associations.

104. *Effect of Wage Changes on Labour Supply.*—Present larger earnings have beneficially affected migration. But change of wages during normal times have a tendency to bring in discord and animosity between neighbouring gardens.

105. *Minimum Wages.*—Absolutely unnecessary.

106. *Deductions.*—(i) Practically nil.

(ii) Nil.

(iii) Nil.

(iv) Quite unnecessary.

107. (i) Daily wages are paid weekly or monthly. Daily extra works are paid for generally weekly but extra leaf plucking prices are paid daily. Weekly advances on wages earned are freely given.

(ii) The monthly payments are generally made during first or second week of the month. But monthly advances for purchasing food and necessaries are made on hat days.

(iii) Absolutely unnecessary. The system is working very satisfactorily.

(iv) Unclaimed wages extremely rare.

108. Not much indebtedness. In case of advances for purchase of carts, bullocks, etc., these are realized very slowly and gradually.

109. There is no profit sharing scheme in use. But bonuses generally at five to ten rupees varying with regularity of attendance and satisfactory workings are paid.

110. No annual leave except to those who want to return to their native districts with promise of coming back and this is usually three months. Leave not generally taken by workers. But they absent themselves from works whenever it pleases them.

(ii) Labourers who want to return to garden are paid their travelling inward.

XIII.—Industrial Efficiency of Workers.

112. *Comparative Changes in Efficiency of Indian Workers in Recent Years.*—Efficiency increased a little for tea garden workers.

The REV. TANURAM SAIKIA, M.L.C., Golaghat, Assam.

1. *Origin of Labour.* (With reference to the tea industry in the Assam Valley).—The great majority of coolies on the gardens are immigrants, or descended from immigrants. On some gardens, however, Kacharis, Nagas, Mikirs and other hill peoples of Assam are employed. Men of the Assamese race are employed as mistris and overseers.

Recently many Oriyas and Telegus have come to work on the new railroads, but on the whole there are not as many immigrants coming as formerly.

6. *Recruitment for Assam.*—Government control is most helpful for the welfare of the coolies. At present there are many inequalities between the methods and practices of the larger companies and smaller private gardens not only with regard to recruitment, but in matters of wages, sanitation, housing, etc. These methods should be standardized and regulated.

16. It is the custom on all gardens for the company or private manager to provide houses for the labourers.

22. Conditions are much better than they once were, and on the whole much better than in the villages, but there is room for improvement on many of the gardens.

37. On some gardens there is no provision for orphan or dependent children or for old and disabled men. These are left to go about begging, and there is no help for them in case of illness.

40. Primary education is essential to the welfare of the labouring classes. It is the foundation for improvement along every line. The children should be given opportunity to learn various kinds of crafts as well as to read and write. I agree with Lt.-Col. W. D. Smiles as he is quoted in "The Assam Review" for July, 1929:—

"At present we have too many high schools and not sufficient primary schools, and 'the ryot is paying for the education of the Babu's son.' After all, agriculture is the backbone of our province, and we ought to make it possible for the ryots and the tea garden coolies as well to have a sufficient education to save themselves from the grip of the moneylender, to encourage thrift, and to appreciate and be able to make use of the savings bank and the co-operative society".

Mr. C. S. MULLAN, M.A., I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar, Jorhat.

I have the honour to submit the following note on vital statistics in tea gardens (item 143 of the schedule of subjects), with special reference to this district, which is one of the largest tea districts in Assam. This note may be read along with paragraphs 181 and 182 of Chapter VI of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1921-22.

2. The official figures of vital statistics on tea gardens are compiled *districtwari* from the annual returns submitted by managers under Rule 61 of the rules made by the Government of Assam under Act VI of 1901. These figures are then consolidated in the offices of the Commissioners of Divisions, and are published in the annual reports on immigrant labour. In addition to the annual returns, managers are also required to submit a monthly return of vital statistics. These returns are sent to the Sub-divisional or District Magistrate and are forwarded by him to the civil surgeon of the district, who uses the figures for the compilation of his district public health returns, and these are finally consolidated and published in the annual reports on public health. There is really no check in the case of any of these returns. The real check is made at the time of the inspection of the estate by the Deputy Commissioner or Sub-divisional Officer, who examines the registers of vital occurrences and calculates the death and birth rate since last inspection, comparing them with the previous figures and drawing the attention of the manager to any irregularities or points of importance.

3. The entries in the Garden Registers of Births and Deaths are invariably entered by the Doctor Babus of the gardens, who, except in the case of events which take place in the garden hospital, generally receive information from the line choukidars. The entries are in many cases initialled by the visiting European medical officers, who, as a general rule, make weekly visits to the individual gardens in their group. Correct registration, therefore, depends almost entirely on the Doctor Babus. Managers as a class are quite eager that their registers should be correctly kept, but they look to the Doctor Babu and the visiting medical officer to see that this is done, and few pay any personal attention to the matter.

4. The following are the death and birth rates (1) for the Assam Valley division, (2) for Sibsagar district for the last five years for which figures are available. The year is for the year ending on the 30th of June annually.

| | Assam Valley. | | Sibsagar District. | | |
|---------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------|-------|
| | Births. | Deaths. | Births. | Deaths. | |
| 1923-24 | .. | 31.11 | 22.5 | 33.6 | 20.5 |
| 1924-25 | .. | 30.41 | 23.91 | 33.1 | 22.06 |
| 1925-26 | .. | 30.62 | 21.79 | 34.5 | 20.62 |
| 1926-27 | .. | 31.64 | 21.16 | 35.1 | 19.52 |
| 1927-28 | .. | 32.41 | 20.61 | 35.6 | 19.03 |
| 1928-29 | .. | Figures not available. | | 33.2 | 22.25 |

The figures for tea gardens in the Sibsagar district given in the Public Health Report are as follows :—

| | Births. | Deaths. |
|------|---------|---------|
| 1923 | .. | 30.77 |
| 1924 | .. | 30.63 |
| 1925 | .. | 29.0 |
| 1926 | .. | 31.18 |
| 1927 | .. | 32.01 |

It will be noticed that even allowing for the fact that the figures in one case are for calendar years and in the other case for years ending on the 30th June, it is difficult to see how the figures can be reconciled, although both sets of figures are based on the same information, namely on the managers' returns.

The provincial figures for birth and death rates are as follows. The figures for Bengal death rates are also given.

| | Assam. | | Bengal. |
|------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Births. | Deaths. | Deaths. |
| 1923 | .. | 28.82 | 23.54 |
| 1924 | .. | 31.04 | 27.30 |
| 1925 | .. | 29.08 | 22.52 |
| 1926 | .. | 30.82 | 23.02 |
| 1927 | .. | 30.25 | 23.47 |

I am afraid that any comparative study of any of these sets of figures would be useless, as there can be no doubt that they are all quite unreliable and more or less worthless. The following extracts from inspection notes recorded by me in April

to June this year may be of interest. Of the examples given two are gardens managed by Europeans with European visiting medical officers, and two are Indian gardens without any visiting European medical officer. I could give other examples of a similar nature.

Garden "G."—Population over 800; all settled. Men 227, women 215, boys 178, girls 152, infants under 2, 61.

"For the last 26 months the death rate works out at 10.8 per mille. For the 28 months before that, i.e., from October, 1924, to April, 1927, the death rate was the same, viz., 10 per mille. This is, of course, less than the death rate in England.

My opinion is that the figures shown are incredible, and that deaths must have taken place which have not been entered into the register."

Garden "S."—Population over 1,500. Sexes equally distributed. "The death rate works out at 10 per mille in 1927 and 19.4 per mille in 1928. The 1927 death rate is a complete impossibility. The reason is that out of the 53 births in 1927 not a single child is shown as having died. This, of course, is impossible in this country, where the rate of infantile mortality is so high. It is clear that the deaths of infants in this garden are not being properly recorded."

Garden "M" (Indian).—Over 400 coolies. Sexes equal. Death rate works out at 18 per mille. "There was only one death in 1927. I should regard this as an impossibility. I questioned the Doctor Babu on the subject of reporting deaths in the garden. He told me it is the line choukidar's duty to report. Apparently when the Doctor Babu gets no report he does not bother. . . . It is incredible that out of 21 children born in 1928 and 1929 not a single one has died."

Garden "R" (Indian).—About 400 coolies. Sexes equal. "Death rate 14, which is exceedingly low. Of the 35 children who were born in the last 26 months only two died."

5. The main inaccuracy in the figures of vital statistics in tea gardens lies, in my opinion, in the non-recording of infants' deaths. There are no separate registers for showing infants' deaths prescribed by the rules, and infants are included along with children (up to 15 years) in the Children's Death Register. Hence in the District or Divisional Immigrant Labour Reports no separate figures for infantile mortality are given. My general conclusions are that the statistics for births in tea gardens in the district are fairly accurate, but the figures of the district death rate are quite unreliable. This does not mean that the figures of all gardens are unreliable. In certain gardens the figures are very accurate, and most excellent graphs of birth and death rates are maintained.

6. There is, of course, no reason why accurate figures cannot be maintained in tea gardens. Everything depends on the Doctor Babus, and any improvement in accuracy must depend upon their realization of the value of such statistics as a guide to the health of the garden. Official courses of instruction to garden Doctor Babus in vital statistics and graphical methods of representation, with a diploma to those who had passed the course, might effect a considerable improvement.

Mr. F. A. S. THOMAS, I.C.S., REGISTRAR OF JOINT STOCK COMPANIES AND TRADE UNIONS, ASSAM.

Question 51.—When I was Deputy Commissioner, and *ex-officio* Commissioner for disputes under the Workmen's Compensation Act, for the district of Lakhimpur, I dealt with a fair number of cases. I believe I am right in saying that none originated in tea garden factories. Practically every case was the result of action instituted by the Assam Oil Company or the Assam Railways and Trading Company, both of which concerns, whenever an appropriate accident occurred, made a practice of depositing in court the full sum due under the Act, according to their interpretation of the facts. If I agreed with the assessment, I called in the payee to receive payment. Otherwise I first of all cleared up the point in doubt by a court hearing in the usual way. The policy of these two companies, in fact, which I endeavoured to assist, was to familiarize their labour with the law even though it involved them in unnecessary trouble, and often in payments which they would never have had to make had they left the initiative to the workmen. There was, I think, only one case (or possibly two) in which the workman disputed the assessment of his own motion.

Question 123.—I have never known of a lock-out in Assam. Strikes, however, are on the whole infrequent considering how ignorant and easily led are the labour forces on the tea gardens.

(i) *Causes.*—The ostensible cause of strikes is almost invariably a demand for an increase of pay. I have very often found, however, that the real cause is something quite different—some real or fancied grievance arising from lack of supervision or oppression by the subordinate staff; some rumour often wildly impossible, of concessions made on other gardens in the matter of wages or tasks; or quite often simply a desire on the part of a section of the labour force to leave the garden and settle elsewhere. With regard to this last, the coolie knows quite well that he is entitled to go when he likes, but prefers to put a good face on it by making up some financial grievance. I have never, I think, found real economic need at the back of a coolie strike. Other causes are contagion from strikes on other gardens, when the coolies have no real idea why they have struck work; an unpopular manager or simply a desire to "try it on" with a new manager or assistant. The most extensive series of strikes with which I have ever had to deal, which quickly involved the labour forces of about eighteen distinct estates was (like most strikes) due to a combination of causes. A young manager had been transferred from one estate to another of the same company very shortly after a minor assault had been committed on him. Unfortunately the company's superintendent who lived on the garden to which he was transferred went on leave quite soon after his arrival. The opportunity was too good to miss, and the coolies struck for a large increase of pay (about 100 per cent. I think). They quite obviously thought that they had to deal with a young manager who had been driven away from one garden, and who would be ready to give way to them. After two days I was called in to settle the strike. I consulted the leaders, and after about an hour's investigation I found that the genuine grievances of the coolies (which affected only a very small number of them) were two only—(1) that two or three lads who were doing the tasks usually given to women were still getting wages as "children." This was of course rectified as soon as it was pointed out, (2) that one of the jemadars was making 16 men do the work of 20, and taking the other 4 to work on the repairs of his house. This also was rectified at once, and the entire labour force then returned cheerfully to work without again mentioning the general increase of wages for which they had ostensibly gone on strike. My opinion of this case was that it was simply a "try on," and that the minor (but genuine) grievances had nothing to do with it. I do not believe that they were the subject of discussion at all before my arrival. Their settlement simply gave the coolies a chance to withdraw gracefully from the contest which they saw had been a mistake.

The consequences of this in itself unimportant and easily settled strike were, however, serious. It occurred at the very end of the dry season when there was little *ticca* (overtime) to be earned, and when the weather was hot. The leaf was unusually late in coming (*ticca* is plentiful once the plucking begins) and the coolies were generally ripe for trouble. The rumour of the minor concessions made on the first garden spread and multiplied until it was generally believed that a large increase of wages had resulted. Other labour forces followed suit, and as I have said, before it was over, the epidemic had spread to eighteen gardens and police had to be sent out to keep the peace and protect property. Some of these strikes were settled by the managers themselves. Others were referred to me. I found in every case to which I was called for intervention that the demand for an increase of wages was simply a slogan, and that the real grievances (where any at all existed) were something entirely different. The root causes being the weather and the rumours of concessions elsewhere. With the break of the rains and the coming of the leaf the trouble disappeared at once.

An altogether different cause of "strikes," and one of which I have had considerable experience, is the recruitment of an unsuitable class of coolies. With the expansion of the industry the old sources of labour proved insufficient, and many experiments were tried with new castes and communities. In such cases the new coolies simply left the garden bag and baggage and no argument or persuasion had the slightest effect.

(ii) I have discussed the character of the strikes in Clause (i) above. They usually lasted one or two days, or rarely in extreme cases, five or six days. I do not of course refer to cases of exodus.

(iii) My invariable method was to ascertain by careful enquiry what were the genuine grievances of the strikers (if any) and to suggest concessions if these seemed desirable, to the employer.

Question 124.—(ii) I have heard of no non-official conciliators in Assam. I was myself often called in as Deputy Commissioner or Sub-divisional Officer by the manager or by the strikers, or both, when a dispute could not be settled at once. I imagine that my methods and the results achieved are similar to those of other officers.

(iii) Not used at all to my knowledge.

Volume VI

Part II

Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on Labour in India.

ASSAM.

Forty-fifth Meeting.

SILCHAR.

Friday, the 3rd January 1930.

PRESENT :

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (Chairman).

SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E.

MR. JOHN CLIFF.

MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S.

MISS B. M. LE POER POWER.

MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A.

LT.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E.,
I.M.S., *Medical Assessor.*

MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN ..

.. *Lady Assessor.*

MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. ..

.. } *Joint Secretaries.*

MR. A. DIBBIN ..

..

Mr. J. S. MERCER, Arcuttipore Tea Estate.

F-1. *The Chairman:* How long have you been a planter here?—Since 1918.

F-2. What was your previous experience?—I was for nine years in Sylhet.

F-3. We understand that here you get the labour that you require without sending out any *sardars*?—Yes.

F-4. Why are you able to get labour so easily?—I put it down to the fact of the garden being such a very healthy one.

F-5. It is known to be a healthy garden?—Yes.

F-6. And many of the people here have been born on the estate? Yes, most of them were born on the estate.

F-7. I understand that you have not required any recruited coolies for the last eleven years?—I have not done any recruiting here at all.

F-8. What advantages do your people get in the way of land?—As far as possible we divide up amongst them the rice land which we have, for their own cultivation.

F-9. How much rice land have you besides your tea land?—About 300 acres.

F-10. Do nearly all your people cultivate the rice land?—The large majority of them do. Some of them also rent rice land from the *busti*.

F-11. And they have cattle as well?—Yes.

F-12. I understand that the birth-rate here is high and that the death-rate is low?—Yes.

F-13. What is the total population on the estate?—1,685.

F-14. How many of those are workers in the tea garden?—888.

F-15. Is that an average, or is that the total?—The total. The daily average is 615.

F-16. What are the average earnings; taking October and November?—Rs. 13 per man; Rs. 9 to Rs. 10 per woman, and from Rs. 4 to Rs. 5 for children.

F-17. As a rule do the people work in families?—Yes.

F-18. What will the family income be?—Well over Rs. 20 a month.

F-19. How many hours' work does that represent?—Not half a day. They do a certain amount of *ticca* work in the afternoon.

F-20. That is extra?—Yes.

F-21. For the rest of the time they are working on their own land or looking after their cattle?—Yes.

F-22. Does their work on their land provide them with a large part of their requirements?—Quite a large part.

F-23. On your garden the people really are all settled, many of them having been born on the place?—Yes. There has been no recruiting for 25 years.

F-24. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Can you give us the total acreage of your garden; how much of it is under tea, how much is under *khet* and how much is under jungle; also how many men, women and young children there are?—I will send you the figures in a day or two.

F-25. *Mr. Cliff*: Are all the houses in which the people live here together?—No, we have three sets of lines, and there is another group in the out-garden.

F-26. Are the houses built under your supervision?—Yes.

F-27. How many houses have you got?—550 altogether.

F-28. How old is the youngest worker on the estate?—Ten years.

F-29. What is the rate at which you employ them on piece-work?—For hoeing we pay them 4 annas for 30 *nals*.

F-30. What do you pay for pruning?—I have to shift that about. In one place we are doing 150 bushes and in another place we are only doing 30.

F-31. Have you a set rate for different classes of work?—No. I give to them what I think is fair.

F-32. Do you vary the rates between the people hoeing and pruning?—No.

F-33. Do they get the same rate?—Yes.

F-34. How do you pay them for plucking?—So much a lb.

F-35. Is it the same rate for a woman?—A woman very often goes out taking her child, and probably the child does plucking for her, and it all goes into the same basket. Children do not pluck as a rule.

F-36. What do the children work at?—Different sorts of jobs. They carry manure and do hand-forking.

F-37. Are they on piece rates?—More or less.

F-38. If they are on time rate, what do you pay them?—We give them their day's pay.

F-39. How much a day do you pay them?—From 2 to 5 annas.

F-40. What do you call a day?—Generally they go out working at about 9 o'clock and come back at about 1 o'clock.

F-41. Is there a school on the estate?—Just on the borders. We keep it up.

F-42. Do all the children go to school?—No, very few of them.

F-43. How many are there going now?—Ten.

F-44. Does the planter insist on their going to school?—No, I do not.

F-45. *Miss Power*: How do you know the age of a child who comes to work? Is there any check on it?—No.

F-46. You say they do not come to work under ten years of age. How do you know?—I am afraid we cannot tell. No mother can tell you the age of her child. They cannot tell you their own age.

F-47. How long does it take to do the ordinary standard piece of work?—They are all finished by 1 o'clock.

F-48. Their hours are from 9 to 1, are they?—From half-past eight.

F-49. Anything they do after that is extra, is it?—Yes, they are paid extra.

F-50. Is the extra included in the figure you gave for the average earnings?—Yes.

. F-51. That is taking the good and bad seasons, all round?—Yes.

F-52. So that the average earnings per month for a family, including the extra, is Rs. 20 a month?—Yes.

F-53. *Mr. Ahmed*: We saw a woman here, a widow with three children, who said she was getting 3 annas a day, working from 6 o'clock in the morning until 2 or 3 o'clock?—She did not tell you the amount she gets from the garden towards the upkeep of those children. She is also living with her son-in-law, and as for going to work at 6 o'clock, she cannot know at what time it strikes 6 o'clock. No coolie in the garden goes out before 9 o'clock.

F-54. Some children told me they were getting from 9 to 12 annas a week, working from morning till 2 or 3 o'clock?—They may be absent for 2 or 3 days in the week.

F-55. If your workers fall ill, do they get anything?—Yes, they get a sick allowance.

F-56. Do the people living outside the garden get anything except the wage they work for?—They only get the wage they work for.

F-57. Four annas a day for a man and three annas for a woman?—Yes.

F-58. With regard to maternity benefit, you do not keep any check of the births taking place outside your garden?—No.

F-59. *Mr. Clow*: For how long in the year does this casual labour work?—From 9 to 10 months.

F-60. What is the strength of it? About 100 in busy times.

F-61. You said that out of the total population on this estate, numbering 1,685, only about half are actually workers? Are the other half all unable to work?—The infants cannot work, and the old people are past work.

F-62. Nevertheless, half is a big proportion of non-workers?—They can work if they like, but they do not want to.

F-63. How many are unable to work because they are infants or too old, and how many are simply idle?—I cannot say straight away.

F-64. Do you compel everybody who is on the estate, and who is able to work, to do his *hazira*?—No, we cannot compel them.

F-65. The *hazira* is not a compulsory task for workers on the estate?—A great many of them do not come out to work. I do not go round and chivvy them out. Sometimes I get a big lot out; on other days I get much fewer. Tomorrow, for instance, being Saturday there will be very few out. There are very few out on Monday, the day after pay day.

F-66. What day is market day?—Sunday.

F-67. Why are there few out at work on Saturday?—I do not know. They seem to be collecting their money and getting ready to go to the market. They generally use that day to wash their clothes in order to go to the market on Sunday, and on Monday they are generally unable to come back to work.

F-68. You have no means of compelling your people to come out to work if they do not want to?—No. They work as long as they want to work.

F-69. Are the piece-work rates the same in all the gardens in this district?—As far as I know, yes.

F-70. So that if their earnings are lower on one garden than on another it means they do not do so much work there?—That is so.

F-71. *Sir Alexander Murray*: I see from your books that there are roughly 1,860 acres altogether on the estate, of which only 860 are under tea cultivation and I notice that in the last return you show the permanent garden labour as 651. You sub-divide the 80 outside labourers into 30 permanent and 50 temporary. Why do you say that 30 of the outside labourers are permanent and 50 are temporary?—Thirty of them come down here practically every day.

F-72. You have 651 permanent workers on the garden out of a total population of 1,685?—Yes.

F-73. I notice that in the return which you give for the month of September you show that the average wage per head of the daily working strength comes out in the case of men to Rs. 10-5 per month, in the case of women to Rs. 7-8 per month and in the case of the working children to Rs. 5-1 per month. The "extras" bring up those figures to Rs. 11-4, Rs. 14-10 and Rs. 5-10, respectively. Do these figures represent the total which you think each of the working men, women and children get?—Yes.

F-74. You said a little while ago that Rs. 20 were the average earnings of a family, but according to the figures I have just quoted the average earnings seem to be Rs. 30?—I said that the average earnings were well over Rs. 20.

F-75. *The Chairman*: I see an item here of "time expired coolies re-engaged." What does "time expired coolies" mean?—That refers to the time when agreement used to be given.

F-76. Why do you make any entry there? Every coolie here gets a bonus after doing so many days' work. A man gets Rs. 10 and a woman Rs. 8. It is the survival of an old custom. Our forms have never been changed. There used to be an agreement before; now there is a bonus given at the completion of a year's work. We retain the old labour forms.

F-77. As a matter of fact the coolies are under no engagement form?—No.

F-78. I gather from what you told us that a much larger number than 86 out of 288 men had been here for more than one year?—That is what they have got during the month.

F-79. These items refer to the number who have been paid a bonus over and above their earnings?—Yes.

F-80. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Is that bonus included in the figures which I just now put to you?—Yes.

F-81. How much leave do you give for child-birth?—Three months.

F-82. You give the woman three months' leave with full pay, do you?—Yes.

F-83. *Colonel Russell*: How many births were there last year?—There were 60 births for the calendar year 1929.

F-84. Out of a population of 1,685?—Yes.

F-85. What was the number of deaths?—16.

F-86. *Mr. Ahmed*: You do not keep a record of the number of births and deaths among the people living outside the garden?—No.

F-87. *The Chairman*: I see another item here of "absconded during the month" and "discharged during the month." I take it from what you have said that practically no coolies leave the garden?—Very few. Sometimes a coolie runs away because he has got into debt, and sometimes there is a family row and the man goes away for a month or two and comes back again. There is no return to their original districts; they regard themselves as permanently living here.

F-88. *Colonel Russell*: What medical arrangements have you here?—There is a hospital outside the lines; it has two bedrooms, one for the males and one for the females.

F-89. Are they ever occupied?—Never.

F-90. What can a man earn here if he comes in the hoeing season?—Sometimes Rs. 14 a month.

(The witness withdrew.)

**PHUL BIASAI, daughter of Jaglal Ahir and a woman worker
at the Arcuttipore Tea Estate.**

F-91. *Mrs. Ataur Rahman*: How old are you?—I do not know.

F-92. How long have you been working here?—Since I have been married, that is, about 10 or 12 years.

F-93. Have you been working in the garden during that time?—Yes.

F-94. How much do you earn?—Three annas a day. I go to work between 8 and 9 in the morning and come back between 12 and 2.

F-95. What sort of work do you do?—Pruning.

F-96. Have you had any children whilst on the estate?—No, my husband is dead.

F-97. Does your father live with you?—Yes.

F-98. Does he receive a pension from the garden?—No.

F-99. Do you work as long as you can, or do you not want to do any extra work?—After 2 o'clock I cannot work any more as I am too tired.

F-100. How long do you work during the plucking season?—I work from 9 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon with an interval of an hour for lunch.

F-101. Who lives with you in the same house?—My sister, my brother and my father.

F-102. Do they all work?—My brother does not work in the garden except occasionally, but my sister does the same work as I do.

F-103. Have you any lands to cultivate?—Yes, we pay nothing for our rice land. The garden gives us rice land. This year we got 32 maunds of paddy from our rice land, but this year has been an abnormal one. For the last three years I have not been having very good harvests, but this year is a bumper year.

F-104. What do you earn in the rains?—From 4 annas to Re. 1 according to the number of hours I put in.

F-105. What happens when you fall sick?—I get a sick allowance of 9 annas a week.

F-106. Are you in debt?—I incurred a debt of Rs. 100 in connection with my brother's marriage. I borrowed it from my cousin.

F-107. Could you not have got that advance from the manager of the garden?—We can get advances from the manager, and we sign the agreement with our thumb impression.

(The witness withdrew.)

ASSAM.

Forty-sixth Meeting.

SILCHAR.

Saturday, the 4th January 1930.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (Chairman).

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| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | MR. JOHN CLIFF. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. | LT.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S., <i>Medical Assessor.</i> |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA | Assistant Commissioners. |
| MR. A. B. BEDDOW, URRUSBUND TEA ESTATE, CACHAR | |
| MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN | Lady Assessor. |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. | Joint Secretaries. |
| MR. A. DIBBIN | |

Dr. G. C. RAMSAY, O.B.E., M.D. (Edin.), D.T.M.&H. (Eng.), Medical Officer to the Labac Medical Practice, (examined at the Labac Central Hospital, Dewan P. O., Cachar.)

F-108. *The Chairman:* How long have you been engaged in this anti-malaria work in the tea gardens?—During the past four years I have been investigating the factors responsible for the varying degrees of malarial incidence on the tea estates in the Labac Medical Practice and during the past two years in conjunction with the Managers I have been actively engaged assisting in the control of malaria on the gardens in this Practice.

F-109. We should be glad to know with what success your work has been attended?—I will quote as an example the results on Bandu Tea Estate as I have just been informed the Royal Commission intends to inspect this garden to-day. Bandu Tea Estate was a very unhealthy garden until malaria was controlled there. Since I took over medical charge of this garden in October 1919 the death-rate was always higher than the birth-rate and the sick-rates were always extremely high. I have prepared a graph to show the results of malaria control there. This graph does not merely indicate the reduction in the sickness rate due to malaria only, but includes the figures for all diseases. The common sense reason for including all diseases in a graph is that it eliminates any diagnostic errors on the part of my medical establishment and above all if malaria is such an important factor as we believe it to be in the sickness rate and if we succeed in controlling malaria the result must be a reduction in the total sickness. The graph shows clearly the effect of malaria control, i.e., a reduction in the total sick-rates during the past two years. Further during this period the birth-rate has at last exceeded the death-rate. I would mention here that actual field control of malaria, i.e., oiling, etc., on the tea estates in this Practice is carried out under the supervision of the Managers and Superintendents. I personally only act in an advisory capacity. The credit for the reduction of sickness at Bandoo is therefore due to the efficient control of malaria by the Garden Manager. I herewith submit the total sick-rate figures on this garden for the years 1927, 1928 and 1929 and the cost of malaria control likewise for Labac Tea Estate, the garden now being inspected.

W-110. Sir Alexander Murray: Was there any difference in weather conditions?—That is immaterial as our climatic conditions in Cachar are much the same annually. It is mainly a question of physical geography. In Assam, high lying tea estates like Bundoo are usually very unhealthy, that is, highly malarious, whereas low lying land like Lebac Bheel Garden here is usually very healthy. I have recently published, through the medium of the Ross Institute, London, articles recording the results of our researches on this subject. These Papers are entitled, respectively—(1) "The factors which determine the varying degrees of malarial incidence in Assam Tea Estates and the fundamental principles governing mosquito control of malaria in Assam" and (2) "The Solution of Assam's Malaria Problems." In connection with the Ross Institute, London, I would mention that Sir Malcolm Watson there is doing a great service to the tea industry by giving a course of instruction on malaria control to tea planters. The tea planters from my experience here is the medium by which malaria in Assam will in future be controlled. The tea planter at present controls the insect pests which damage and destroy his tea bushes so why should he not control the dangerous insects, which breed in his drains and streams around his lines and which damage and destroy his labour force? Let me revert to my main object. I shall illustrate here the main points relating to factors responsible for the varying degrees of malarial incidence in Assam and the solution of our problems.

For instance, it is well known that in the Federated Malay States malaria has been efficiently controlled. This was due mainly to the pioneer work of Sir Malcolm Watson who demonstrated the principles by which malaria could be controlled there. In that country you have a more or less even distribution of rainfall throughout all the months of the year and the breeding areas of the anopheline mosquitoes which carry malaria are perennial. The problem in the Federated Malay States resolved itself into controlling these perennial breeding places. In Assam we have an uneven distribution of rainfall, we have a dry season and a monsoon season. In Assam during the dry weather the majority of the drains and streams on high lying land dry up. The result is that mosquitoes migrate to breeding places on the low lying land where water is still available. At the beginning of the rainy season the mosquitoes, at any rate our dangerous malaria mosquitoes migrate back again to the clear water in the drains and streams, etc., on high land. The malaria season is mainly the warm monsoon or rainy season, hence the reason for the unhealthiness or the high incidence of malaria on high lying lands. During the cold weather when the night temperature drops to 60° F. the malaria parasite does not develop in the mosquito. When the night temperature rises above 60° F. the malaria season begins. The solution of the Assam malaria problem therefore resolves itself into a study of the breeding places of anopheline mosquitoes during the season of the year when malaria is being transmitted in Nature. Unfortunately in Assam most previous investigations were carried out during the cold dry season of the year and not during the monsoon or malarious seasons. In the course of our malaria studies here we have found that there are twenty species of anopheline mosquitoes in Assam. During approximately the past three years we have dissected about 40,000 anopheline mosquitoes caught in Nature and have discovered *anopheles minimus* is practically entirely responsible for transmitting malaria in Assam. Practically speaking all the other species can be disregarded—they feed chiefly on cows and other animals whereas *anopheles minimus* is a human blood lover. We have studied the bionomics of *anopheles minimus* very carefully.—

- (1) We find it will not breed in Nature in contaminated water: by that I mean muddy or silty water or water contaminated with iron oxide bacteria or covered with a scum of surface algae.
- (2) It will not breed in water which has a high velocity of current. It will however breed in the clear still water of pockets at the banks of a fast flowing stream.
- (3) It will not breed in dense shade.

We find the conditions under which this dangerous mosquito breeds are—

- (1) Clear water.
- (2) A certain degree of sunlight.

Reverting to physical geography and the effects of rainfall in creating breeding areas, when rain falls on the earth's surface we know that the resultant effects on the water, viz., evaporation, transpiration, percolation and run off

are dependent on vegetation, the physical features, soil composition and strata of a district. These factors determine the formation of seepages, springs, streams, rivers and swamps. A comparison of the incidence of malaria on various types of terrain shows that on low lying land where the water in the drains and streams runs silty or muddy during the malaria season these areas are practically malaria free, whereas plateaux and high lying land where the water in drains and streams is crystal clear are highly malarious. It is on these malarious plateaux and high lying land that tea is in its natural environment, i.e., where there is natural soil aeration. On low lying swampy or floodable land tea is in an unnatural environment and the land has to be drained to create that natural environment, viz., soil aeration. Fortunately the majority of these low lying drains run silty and are therefore safe during the malaria season. It should be noted that during the cold dry weather when the dangerous mosquitoes have migrated to the now undisturbed clear waters at low levels the temperature factor comes in. Under 60° F. the mosquito cannot become infected with malaria and in any case anopheles minimus at this time of the year is rarely seen in the adult stage, i.e., the chance of transmitting infection is greatly limited. During the cold dry weather mosquitoes pass the greater part of their life history in the larval stage, i.e., in water. Studying the subject further we find ravines or re-entrants may be safe or dangerous — this depends on their angle of inclination, i.e., velocity of flow or on the soil composition of these ravines. Swamps in their natural state, that is densely shaded with swamp vegetation, are absolutely safe. Most of the malaria in Assam has unfortunately been unwittingly created by mankind. In their natural state, that is, when the plateaux and hills in this province are covered with virgin jungle, i.e., under dense shade the dangerous anopheles minimus is absent. When the jungle is felled and cleared, i.e., when streams are exposed and drains dug, anopheles minimus and malaria are introduced. It is interesting to note that the pioneer tea planters in Assam after clearing away the jungle in order to plant tea described the fever which they unwittingly created as "clearance" fever. The exposed clear water in streams, streamlets and man made drains on malarious land was the source of this clearance fever not the emanations from the soil after burning the jungle as originally believed. The same condition has been going on for hundreds of years amongst the hill tribes who *jhum*, that is, cut down and burn the jungle to grow hill rice.

The study of the bionomics of anopheles minimus leads us to a study of the bionomics of man. On malarious land a vicious circle is established. Through ill health the earning capacity of the worker is reduced, deaths and sickness in his family or amongst his friends and relations are liable to make him discontented. Again rarely is rice land, which coolies much appreciate, available on highly malarious terrain as rice grows best in its natural environment on low lying healthy land. On this malarious terrain it is the children and the non-immune imported recruits who chiefly suffer. Those who survive develop a partial immunity, i.e., become to a certain extent salted. Compare the conditions on healthy gardens with plenty available rice land where we see highly contented labour forces. There are gardens in this district which have never recruited for over thirty years owing to being practically malaria free, and where there has been a natural increase in the population. We have at last after much patient research got down to bed rock facts, and the planters on the unhealthy gardens in this district have rapidly appreciated the importance of controlling malaria as they are well aware that a healthy labour force becomes a happy labour force; also from an economic point of view they realize that the high expenditure incurred on drugs, diets and concessions to the sick can more profitably be spent in providing increased facilities for earning to the employees to the mutual benefit of labour and capital. At present in my district malaria is being controlled mainly by oiling, that is, killing the larvae of anopheles minimus in their breeding places. An organization consisting of a malaria surveyor and larva catchers was created for each garden in this Practice. Through this medium the dangerous breeding places have been located. The larvae were sent to this Central Laboratory and classified here. We are now going back to Nature for safety and intend finally to substitute oiling by biological control, that is, we are growing dense shade, such as privet hedges over dangerous clear water drains and streamlets, replanting cleared dangerous undrainable swamps with swamp vegetation and converting drainable swamps into land which will be available for rice cultivation by means of contour drainage, these contour drains again being covered with dense shade. We are also rectifying as far as possible by appropriate measures the errors whereby malarious areas were unwittingly created in the past, e.g., by *bunds*, etc., in road construction or by filling in dangerous borrow pits and by

substituting piped water supplies or *pucca* wells for dangerous tanks and *kucha* wells. But in the meanwhile we are continuing control of *Anopheles minimus* by larvicides until biological control is established.

F-111. *The Chairman*: Is this mosquito peculiar to Assam?—No, it is found in Bengal, Burma and other parts of India.

F-112. Is it the female mosquito which does the mischief?—Yes, the male does not bite, although recently Macgregor at the Welcome Bureau of Scientific Research has succeeded in making male mosquitoes bite by smearing the skin with honey.

F-113. *The Chairman*: Have you the results of your work in 1929?—I have not so far gone into the complete details of our 1929 results as this is only January 4, 1930. Also I do not believe in rushing to print before I have assessed the true value of our work, although as the result of their investigations here Dr. Williams (America) and Prof. Swellengrebel (Holland) of the Malaria Commission of the League of Nations, who recently visited me, have asked me to publish at an early date a paper on the practical benefits of malaria control in Assam. This in my opinion could be better done by many of the planters in this district who could probably express more clearly than I could the practical benefits which have accrued to their labour forces and their gardens from malaria control. However, authorities on public health such as Col. Russell, here demand a five-year period on which to assess the value of any public health measures on a community.

F-114. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you send reports to your Agents?—I do not as a rule send special reports on my researches, but I write a general report on the health of this Practice annually and submit recommendations.

F-115. *The Chairman*: What reduction is shown by your graphs during the last three or four years since you began your work?—We take as our unit, days of sickness of patients (outdoor and indoor) under medical care. On December 31, 1929, our figures show 39,130 days less sickness on all the gardens in the Labac Medical Practice for the year 1929 as compared with the year 1927 when malaria was not being controlled.

F-116. What population is that?—About 18,000 souls.

F-117. *Col. Russell*: I think you told me the malaria spleen-rate on this garden (Labac Tea Estate) has been reduced from 28 per cent. to 1 per cent.?—Yes. The Manager and the Superintendent have efficiently controlled malaria on this garden. This spleen-rate was checked a few days ago by Dr. Bentley, Director of Public Health, Bengal, who is a well-known malarialogist, and by Dr. Bruce Mayne, a distinguished American Malaria Research Worker, when over 300 children were examined. On Durganagar Tea Estate Mr. Brown, the Manager, has reduced the spleen-rate from 67 per cent. to 7 per cent. This spleen-rate was checked by Sir Malcolm Watson last year when found it to be 32 per cent. and this year by Dr. Bentley. On Bandu the spleen-rate in December 1926 was 72 per cent. When checked recently it was found to be 11 per cent.

F-118. Do you deal with hookworm?—We did some years ago, but have done practically nothing in this direction for over four years. The reason is that after much research in this district we found that the incidence of hookworm infection, which is approximately 100 per cent. in the adult population, was a common factor on healthy and unhealthy estates and that the real factor undermining the health of the labour forces on my unhealthy estates was malaria. In my early days here it was the popular belief among my own profession that hookworm infection was the main factor in causing the anaemia and ill health among the labour forces. I accepted this belief until I conclusively proved to my own satisfaction that there is the same degree of hookworm infection amongst the coolies on healthy estates as there is on unhealthy estates. In Cachar the condition can be described generally as hookworm infestation but not as hookworm disease. What used to be classified here as hookworm disease in days gone by, we found on investigation to be the after effects of malaria or dysentery. During these researches on hookworm I found pigs were able to transmit hookworm infection through swallowing human faeces containing human hookworm eggs, the hookworm larvae subsequently hatching out from the undestroyed human ova. A research worker in Calcutta did not agree with me, he said it was impossible that human ova could survive passage through the pig owing to the high temperature of their bodies which varies from 102 to 104°. In order to deal with that point I hatched out hookworm larvae from the faeces of coolie patients suffering from pneumonia where there was a sustained temperature of 105° for a week. My work on pigs was subsequently confirmed by Professor Chandler at the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine and by others.

F-119. *The Chairman*: To what extent have you succeeded in reducing the incidence of malaria during your four years work?—I have not the available time to check individually 18,000 people, i.e., examine their blood for malaria parasites, but I herewith submit the spleen-rates in children born in the gardens of this Practice which are a very true indication of the reduction of malarial incidence.

F-120. From what you have told us am I right in saying that the total sickness rate has been reduced to $1/5$ of what it was four years ago?—Over the whole Practice it is about $1/5$, but of course the reduction has been greatest on highly malarious gardens as will be seen from the Bandu sick-rates which I have submitted. I am fortunate in this Practice in having some very healthy gardens, i.e., with very little malaria.

F-121. *Sir Alexander Murray*: In the Immigration Returns the principal disease is stated not to be malaria but dysentery and respiratory diseases?—In a highly malarious garden in which the constitutions of the people have been undermined by malaria they fall a ready prey to diseases such as dysentery, pneumonia and tuberculosis. We find that the incidence of dysentery, pneumonia and tuberculosis is much less on land where the constitutions of the people have not been undermined by malaria.

F-122. *The Chairman*: I take it that malaria is really the main factor causing these other diseases: it is not a question of the number of people who die from malaria but of the number who are weakened by malaria?—That is the whole point.

F-123. *Sir Alexander Murray*: But tuberculosis and other diseases exact a heavier toll than malaria?—In the Labac Medical Practice during the five-year period (1922-1926) 393 coolies died from malaria while 258 died from tuberculosis and 457 from pneumonia.

F-124. *Col. Russell*: Yes, but that is because those who have suffered from malaria are more susceptible to respiratory diseases.

F-125. *The Chairman*: The important thing is that in recruiting districts there is a prejudice in many cases against Assam because the people have heard of the heavy mortality in years gone by in Assam. It is very important that we should have figures which plain people can easily understand to indicate what has been achieved in removing this blot from many of the tea gardens?—I herewith submit the statistics for my Practice for the five-year period (1922-1926) and the death and birth-rates for the various gardens in my Practice during 1928. Let me reiterate, it is mainly the malarious gardens which have to recruit hence the reason I have specially investigated the subject of malaria control. Low lying or healthy gardens here do not want recruits. On these healthy gardens it is not the type of coolie who was originally recruited which has been the factor in maintaining the natural increase in the population it is type of terrain on which they first settled.

F-126. But in a recruiting district you will readily understand that it is not the good gardens that are heard of so much as bad ones?—Yes, the unhealthy or malarious gardens.

F-127. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you get kala-azar?—Yes, it is occasionally imported from the Sylhet district, but I have never found a case where the infection was contracted in my own Practice.

F-128. *Mr. Cliff*: What is the cost of this anti-malaria work?—The cost is trivial compared with the benefits obtained. I herewith submit the cost of malaria control on the two gardens, Labac and Bundoo, which are being inspected by the Royal Commission to-day, also the cost to date of the malaria research work in this Laboratory which has been borne by Messrs. Macneill & Co., Agents to the Labac Medical Practice.

F-129. How far can a mosquito travel?—We find that there is a species of anopheles here called *anopheles gigas* which breeds in the hills above 3,000 feet during the rains. This species migrates to our gardens here 14 miles away from the hills during the cold weather. In this connection I would mention that I carried out investigations on the flight of mosquitoes in Transjordania (Asia Minor) and found that at over 500 yards away from a pool breeding anopheles it was extremely difficult to catch a mosquito. In our gardens here we control the breeding areas of the dangerous *anopheles minimus* up to a half mile from the coolie lines and this we have found to be quite efficacious.

The truth of the matter is the breeding places of *anopheles minimus* on highly malarious tea estates in my Practice might for practical purposes be described as peri-domestic. We have a garden which had before malaria was controlled a 76 per cent. spleen-rate not $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile away from a low lying village with a spleen-rate of 3 per cent. which shows the peri-domestic nature of malaria in Assam.

(The witness withdrew.)

PATCHOO, a returned *sardar*, at Bundoo Tea Gardens,
(Mr. S. Lall interpreted).

F-130. *The Chairman*: Where do you come from?—Bihar.

F-131. When did you first come to the tea gardens?—I came here when I was quite a boy.

F-132. Have you a wife and children?—Yes, my family is here.

F-133. Did you go as a *sardar* to bring some of your own people to the tea gardens?—I went last year. I work here as a *sardar*, that is in charge of a gang, and I went to my own country last year recruiting. I have done so three times. I went in 1910 and brought back five labourers; on another occasion I brought back one labourer and last year I brought back none.

F-134. Are you more happy and comfortable than you were before you came to the tea gardens?—I prefer this; I have all my family and cattle here.

F-135. Why were you not able to bring more people back with you?—When I went there last year it was a good year for the crops; there was a lot of rain and there were good crops and consequently the people did not want to leave.

F-136. Did you tell them that you were happier and more prosperous here than you had been before you came?—No, I did not say anything like that.

F-137. How long did you stay in your own country?—Three months; I only went to the *thana* round about my own home.

F-138. Have you relatives in your country?—Yes, I have a brother but he was not willing to come.

F-139. Were they afraid of coming here for any reason?—I cannot say why they do not come.

F-140. *Mr. Cliff*: May I take it that you have been on this garden for thirty years?—I came here as a boy.

F-141. Were you married on the estate?—No, I came out with my wife.

F-142. Are you a *sardar* now?—I work on my land; I do not do any work on the tea gardens now.

F-143. *The Chairman*: Who lives with you in your house?—I have four sons of whom two are married; I have two more sons; I had a daughter who was married, but she is dead now.

F-144. *Miss Power*: What bonus did you get for each recruit you brought out?—Rs. 25 a head.

F-145. *The Chairman*: How many of your family are working on the tea gardens?—The rest of the family.

(The witness withdrew.)

BONAMALLI, a returned *sardar*, at Bundoo Tea Gardens.

F-146. *The Chairman*: How long have you been working on the tea gardens?—I came here from Bihar in 1910.

F-147. Are you better off here than you were in your own country before you came here?—All my interests are here; what could I do in my own country now?

F-148. Have you your wife and children here?—I married at home and brought my wife with me.

F-149. Have you any children?—I had a boy, but he died.

F-150. When did you last go as a recruiting *sardar*?

Mr. Healy: In 1928.

F-151. *The Chairman*: How often have you gone as a *sardar* recruiting?—Twice. I brought five labourers on one occasion, but the next time I got none.

F-152. Why did you get none the second time?—There were many whom I asked to come but they were not willing to come with me.

F-153. Why were they not willing to come with you?—I do not know.

F-154. How long did you stay there?—One and a half months; I have plenty of relatives there.

F-155. Do they live comfortably in Bihar?—I did not go to my own village because that is too far from the railway; my relatives have got their *khet* land in their own country.

F-156. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What pay did you get last week?—Last week I was working on my own land, but since last month I have been working on the tea garden.

F-157. *Mr. Cliff*: Have you saved any money?—It is all I could do to get enough food to eat; how could I save?

F-158. Are you in debt?—I am in debt to a very small extent to various *banias*; I am in debt for paddy seedlings and so on.

F-159. Have you any cattle?—I had a bullock but I sold it.

F-160. What did you sell it for?—Rs. 50-8.

F-161. Have you still got the money?—I am keeping it because I want to buy another bullock.

F-162. Have you goats and chickens?—Yes, I have goats and chickens.

F-163. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How much *dal* have you in your house?—I have mortgaged my crop; I have 2/3 of an acre of land.

F-164. To whom is it mortgaged?—To the *banias*. I lost three head of cattle by rinderpest and two were killed by tigers or leopards. I borrow small amounts of money from my own people and they take the crop.

F-165. *Mr. Cliff*: Why did you do that if you were working regularly?—I could not work on the tea garden because I had to work on my own fields; I could not go to work in the factory and earn money so that I had to borrow money.

F-166. *The Chairman*: Can you get advances from the company if you want to?—Yes I can get advances and I have had advances without interest. I had to get temporary advances for seed.

F-167. *Mr. Cliff*: In the past have you taken advances from the gardens?—Yes. I cannot get seed, so I go to the *bania* and get seed from him.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. L. A. Healey, Manager of Bundoo Tea Estate, and Mr. J. K. Cullinan, Superintendent, Diwan Division, Tarrapore Tea Company Limited.

F-168. *The Chairman*: On what principle do you select the men whom you send as *sardars* to recruit?—(*Mr. Healey*) We usually send people with relatives in their own country.

F-169. Do they come and ask to be sent?—Yes.

F-170. Do you satisfy yourself that there is a reasonable chance that they will bring back recruits?—Yes. We also send coolies who are about to retire from work.

F-171. You have no means of judging whether a man is likely to bring back recruits?—They often receive letters from their relatives in their own country saying they want to come to Assam and asking for money.

F-172. Do you see those letters?—Yes, I see them here; I had one the other day asking for money and saying they were poor.

F-173. Do the coolies send money from here to the people in their own country?—Sometimes; and sometimes they ask me to advance a few rupees to send to their relatives. At the moment the total amount of advances is Rs. 255.

F-174. What is the biggest advance you have given to any one coolie?—Some men would come up and often get Rs. 20.

F-175. Is there a big call for advances in the marriage season?—Yes, they get up to Rs. 50 and 60. The marriage season is March.

F-176. This man Bonamali has no children?—Not now. He has had an advance and he is paying back annas 4 a week; there is still Rs. 11-4 outstanding.

F-177. What is the longest time that an advance is outstanding?—They usually run for a year; if possible we recover them in a year.

F-178. Have you an instance in which you have recovered the money in a year?—Yes, a lot of instances.

F-179. Do they ever go into a second or third year?—Not usually, because they work and repay it.

F-180. At what rate do you recover the money?—Annas 4 a week when a man is on full pay.

F-181. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What is your monthly pay roll all together?—From Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 7,000 a month.

F-182. *Mr. Cliff*: You told me this afternoon that you required about 550 workers?—I could do with them.

F-183. You at present have 400 workers. Could you tell us why only two *sardars* were sent last year as against 16 in the previous year?—(*Mr. Cullinan*) For the year 1929 11 *sardars* were sent to their country, not 2.

F-184. Apparently you require another 150 men; can you offer any explanation as to why you cannot get them?—What is wrong with your garden?—(*Mr. Healey*) It is because I have not got a connection with the recruiting districts.

F-185. Would it help you to get that connection if you were able to recruit through authorized agents apart from *sardars*?—You will have to ask that of my Calcutta Managing Agency. I have seen no correspondence on this subject.

F-186. At present you cannot recruit except through *sardars* who must be men who have worked for some time on the garden?—That is not necessary; for instance, this man Patchoo was not working.

F-187. He is a resident?—He has retired here and has a lot of rice land belonging to this Company.

F-188. *Col. Russell*: Is the shortage of labour due to the fact that this is a malarious garden?—This was a very malarious garden until I controlled malaria work.

The Chairman: I take it that is why they have not got a good connection.

F-189. *Col. Russell*: I think this garden suffered very heavily in 1921, when there was a large exodus?—Yes.

F-190. *The Chairman*: How many of your total labour force did you lose at that time?—I was not on the garden at that time, during the non-co-operation period.

F-191. Have you tried short-term recruitment for 6 or 12 months?—No, I have not tried it.

F-192. When these recruits came here in the last two years was any term of employment stated?—No, no term; they are under no contract at all. They come up and work when they like and how they like. They come here and ask to be sent to their countries and they are sent; we repatriated 7 quite recently.

F-193. Did you repatriate them at your own expense?—Yes.

F-194. Why?—Because they were not happy here.

F-195. That was a group or family of people?—Yes.

F-196. From what district did they come?—(*Mr. Cullinan*) From Rewah. The manager resigned shortly after that exodus took place.

F-197. Was that because of the exodus?—I would not say that.

F-198. I take it he had little tact in handling this labour force?—Yes.

F-199. Perhaps he was not a tactful manager?—Yes. It was, of course, during the time when there was non-co-operation.

F-200. I can understand that might be a reason for general unrest, but apparently it affected some gardens much more than others, and I take it that the gardens which were most affected were those in which the management was not tactful?—I would not say that of all of them.

F-201. *Col. Russell*: Do many children die of convulsions on this estate?—(*Mr. Healey*) No; there were some previously, but now it is hardly heard of.

F-202. You do have malaria on the garden?—But very little now.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

KASHIA RAM, coolie, at Bandu Tea Gardens (Interpreted).

F-203. *The Chairman*: Where do you come from?—The Central Provinces.
 F-204. How long have you worked here?—I have been here 2½ years; I came alone; I have an uncle and aunt in my village at home.
 F-205. Have you wife and family here?—No, I am not married.
 F-206. Who do you live with?—I live by myself.
 F-207. What pay do you get?—Rs. 1-8 a week.
 F-208. What do you work on?—Hoeing.
 F-209. Why did you come here?—I quarrelled with my uncle and aunt and came here.
 F-210. Do you like it here?—I eat, drink and live here and I am satisfied.
 F-211. Did a *sardar* bring you here?—I was brought by Shivram, *Sardar*.
 F-212. Did anyone else come with you?—No, Shivram only brought me.
Col. Russell: I should think this man is about 25 years old.
 F-213. *Mr. Cliff*: Have you saved any money?—It is all I can do to get enough food to eat; how can I save?
 F-214. Have you any goats?—I have no cattle and no rice land here.
 F-215. Have you had any schooling?—No.
 F-216. What is your caste?—Gond.

(The witness withdrew.)

Statement made by Mr. J. W. R. McWha to the Royal Commission on Labour on the 4th January 1930 at Labac.

I am the Superintendent of the Labac division of the Tarapore Tea Company. I have been in India since 1908 and on the estate since March 1928. The total population in the Labac Garden is 2,106, of whom 1,094 are workers on the books. We employ very little *faltu* labour. In the season 1928-29 we sent out 58 *sardars* who recruited 99 souls including 64 men. I have enough labour to carry on with but I could do with more. *Sardars* are sent out mainly to keep in touch with the recruiting areas. We do not confine our recruitment to particular areas. In 1928 out of 59 *sardars* sent out 35 returned within the year and in 1929, 42 returned out of 45. We have practically no leakage of coolies in the garden and our coolies have mostly been here many years. It is, however, necessary for us to keep in touch with the recruiting districts. When I opened up a new garden I had no difficulty in obtaining labour. In those days *arkatti* recruiting was going on. I have not experienced any enticement of coolies away from my garden. It is not a fact, as is sometimes alleged, that when a girl marries a man from another garden, a substitute has to be provided from the garden to which she goes. There is no such rule or practice under the Indian Tea Association. The tea factory on the estate comes under the Indian Factories Act. We employ a large surplus labour but I cannot exactly say that this is 25 per cent. of actual requirements. There is no fixed time for the opening and closing of our factory, but this depends on the condition of the leaf which varies with climatic conditions. In 1928 the factory was exempted from the provisions of sections 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 24A and 35 of the Indian Factories Act as regards the classes of labour affected. The factory is completely closed on Thursdays. Last year our factory was inspected by the acting Deputy Commissioner and by the Boiler Inspector. We have had no accidents in our factory under the Indian Workmen's Compensation Act. The labour employed in the factory is not distinct from the labour employed in the garden. The actual-working hours last year did not exceed 23 in any week except for an odd man or two, but the year was an exceptional one owing to the poor crop. *Sardars* are given a bonus of Rs. 10 for each coolie recruited. The coolie recruit has not to pay anything to the *sardar*. The average cost of recruitment of 24 adult coolies for Labac for the year ended 31st August 1929 was Rs. 158 per coolie. 89 coolies were recruited by every *sardar* sent out. In Labac we have 3,064 acres of which 696 acres are under tea. Of the remainder there are about 400 acres of *dhan khet* which is given out to our labourers. The rent we charge is Re. 1 per *keer* (3 acre approximately) which is about one-third of the economic rent. There is plenty of firewood for the coolies. The grant of land and free fuel to the workers is an expense to the garden, since the land is let out at one-third of the market value and bamboo could be sold in the market. The object is the welfare of the workers.

ASSAM.

Forty-seventh Meeting.

SILCHAR.

Monday, the 6th January 1930.

PRESENT :

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (*Chairman*).

| | |
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| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | MR. JOHN CLIFF. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. | L.T.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S. (<i>Medical Assessor</i>). |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA .. | .. } <i>Assistant Commissioners</i> . |
| MR. A. B. BEDDOW .. | .. } |
| MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN, .. | .. <i>Lady Assessor</i> . |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. .. | .. } |
| MR. A. DIBBIN .. | .. } <i>Joint Secretaries</i> . |

Mr. A. F. STUART, Chairman, Mr. G. E. RAYNER, M.L.C. (Sylhet),
Mr. B. GUPTA (Cachar), and Dr. G. C. RAMSAY, O.B.E.,
representatives of the Surma Valley Branch of the Indian Tea
Association.

F-217. *The Chairman*: What is the membership of your Branch of the Association?—(*Mr. Stuart*) 344 gardens.

F-218. Are they completely represented in your Branch?—Yes.

F-219. There are none of the gardens outside your Association?—90 per cent. of the gardens are represented in the Association.

F-220. How often does your Branch hold meetings?—About four or five times a year.

F-221. Do you at those meetings consult together as to the general progress and prosperity of your industry here?—We discuss all subjects relative to the industry and matters such as transport difficulties arising in getting goods forward in the interests of our labour and the community generally.

F-222. Do you discuss amongst yourselves general questions as to the improvement of the conditions of your labourers on your estates?—We do.

F-223. So that you may all benefit from the experience and the ideas of each of your individual members?—That is one of our ideas.

F-224. Can you tell me anything about your relations with the agents who control your estates?—We are a Branch of the parent Association in Calcutta, and the relations between our Branch, the Surma Valley Branch, and Calcutta are of the most cordial nature.

F-225. Do you find that you are left considerable freedom in the management of your estates, or does everything have to go to Calcutta for reference?—All important matters have to be referred to Calcutta or to London as the case may be. Some gardens are governed directly from London and only have Calcutta as forwarding agents.

F-226. In the offices of the agents, whether in Calcutta or London, have you any practical tea planters who have been managers of tea estates that they may know the difficulties with which you have to contend?—I think in most instances they employ practical men; planters of seniority are taken into the offices.

F-227. Then do you feel that your difficulties are understood and sympathetically dealt with in the offices of your agents?—Yes.

F-228. What kind of agreements have you in your Association with regard to standardizing methods? I understand you have an agreement to prevent what we might describe as the poaching of labour from one garden to another; where you have gone to the great expense of bringing coolies to your garden you naturally do not like them to be enticed away to another garden. Have you such an agreement?—We have what we call rules between ourselves. Those rules do not in any way affect the free movement of labour. Those rules are made to protect us from one or two black sheep whom we unfortunately have in our community who would, if those rules did not exist, see their neighbours import labour and then entice that labour to come and work on their gardens at the expense of our importation.

F-229. Have you a copy of those rules?—They are published every year in our Annual Report.

F-230. Then they are available to us in that form. What improvements have been made on your gardens since the enquiry that was held in 1921-22?—I take it you were here and actively engaged in the industry at that time?—I was. Very great improvements have taken place since that enquiry; there have been improvements generally with regard to sanitation, better water schemes have been adopted and there has been a general increase in wages.

F-231. From the figures supplied it would appear that wages roughly speaking have increased 100 per cent.?—We do not make the increase quite as much as that; we make the increase to be approximately 40 to 50 per cent. on the family earnings.

F-232. My figures show an increase of 100 per cent. in the last 20 years?—We are taking our figures from the last enquiry.

F-233. You make your figures on the family earnings to be between 40 and 50 per cent. increase as compared with 1921?—Yes.

F-234. Can you give the Commission figures as to the improvement with regard to health over that period?—We have worked out figures as to infantile mortality. The general health rate has certainly improved.

F-235. *Mr. Cliff*: As to wages, do you accept the figures given in the memorandum of the Government of Assam?—These figures are slightly under the calculation we have made; our figures as to wages are: the average man Rs. 10-12-11, women Rs. 8-11-2, children Rs. 5-7-11.

F-236. *Sir Alexander Murray*: That is cash earnings?—Yes.

F-237. *The Chairman*: But we have to note that the 1920-21 figures included diet and subsistence allowances, whereas the figure for 1927-28 represents cash earnings only?—Yes.

F-238. *Mr. Beddow*: May I point out that the last figures are March 1929, whereas Mr. Cliff's figures represent up to March 1928; they have since risen.

F-239. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do the figures* you have given us represent the average over a year or merely the average of two months?—We took them over the year.

F-240. From your wages books?—Yes.

F-241. Not two particular months but a whole year's earnings?—Yes.

F-242. *Mr. Cliff*: That is including all the gardens you represent?—In the Surma Valley, yes.

F-243. *The Chairman*: When we were in some of the recruiting areas we endeavoured to find out what were the feelings of the people in those areas with regard to recruiting for Assam; but I take it that you yourselves have not much knowledge of the recruiting end of your work, the recruiting being done through Calcutta; or do you yourselves hear what the feelings of the people are in the districts and the reasons for a certain reluctance to come to Assam?—(*Mr. Rayner*) I think we all have to take an interest in the recruiting. The matter was very fully discussed at

*The witnesses subsequently reported that these figures were taken from the Reports on immigrant labour in Assam for 1928-29.

the Assam Labour Board Meeting as to our system of recruiting. Other systems of recruiting were advocated by the Chairman of the Assam Labour Board, but it must be understood that the Chairman of the Assam Labour Board has only been connected with recruiting for the last 18 months and I do not consider that he can know so much about it as some of the more experienced men who have had to do with the problem for such a long time. He advocates an entirely different system. He attributes the lack of success in our recruiting to the methods of the Tea Districts Labour Association. In fact, it is not the system of recruiting that is at fault at all; the difficulties are due to the restrictions under the Assam Labour Emigration Act (Act VI of 1901) and, at the moment, the scarcity of recruits. Those are the reasons why our cost per recruit is so high. At the moment, as you notice in our memorandum, the recruits cost a total of Rs. 101 per recruit. Mr. King, the Chairman of the Assam Labour Board, in the course of the discussion, said this figure could be reduced to Rs. 50 if we had a different system of recruiting. But we know his figures are entirely wrong; it could never be done for Rs. 50; the rail fare and the living allowance we have to give the *sardar* come to more than that. If we could get rid of this Act VI and have free recruiting controlled by the industry we should certainly be able to recruit for Rs. 60 or 65, to which would have to be added another Rs. 10 as commission given to the *sardar*. I am certain it could not be done for less than that amount. For instance, a *sardar* may go to his country and be unsuccessful in his attempts to get recruits; the coming and going of that *sardar* will cost Rs. 70 which will be a dead loss. Another *sardar* may go to his country and recruit 8 coolies, a family group. The cost of those coolies will total out at Rs. 65 each and if the *sardar* is allowed Rs. 10 for each recruit, it will come to Rs. 75 per recruit. That is what it would cost if we got rid of this Act VI under which we have to keep a large supervising staff to deal with men going to their country from the gardens. Ex-garden people if they wish to return of their own accord cannot do so under the Act: We have to send an official *sardar* to take them back. The Act interferes with the free movement of labour in India; if our people want to go to see their country and stay there 6 months, we have actually got to send them under a licence; otherwise, if they go, we have to send another man to bring them back. We consider it is most unjust and unfair to put the tea industry under these restrictions while all other industries have free recruiting. Ninety per cent. of the abuses with regard to recruiting for the tea industry have been brought to light through the Tea Districts Labour Association; we want clean recruiting; but other industries recruit from various districts of India and there is no restriction. Do not abuses occur in those other industries? We know perfectly well they do; all of us who have been in the country any length of time know that these abuses occur as commonly, and in fact more commonly, in other industries than in the tea industry, because we try to secure clean recruiting. We only want this control because we who are experienced men know that if we go back to absolutely free recruiting there may be a few of these abuses and we shall get back to the same position as we are in now, i.e., the *arkatti* recruiting of a few years ago. That state of things was put an end to in 1915 when the Assam Labour Board was advocated as a sort of control by the planters themselves.

F-244. But I understand you are opposed to the repeal of Act VI?—No, I think you misunderstand our attitude; we wish Act VI to be repealed; we do not want Act VI at all. We want some mild form of control, not any legislation at all. Our idea is that we could control ourselves; the Magistrates in the Provinces will have powers to check any abuses. We wish to have the registration of emigrants ourselves and we wish the recruiting to be absolutely controlled by ourselves.

F-245. But you do distinctly advocate, under present conditions, the continuance of control in the recruiting districts?—I do not think you will find that in our memorandum; I think you will find we want some mild form of legislation; I think that was a mistake: it should have been: mild form of control.

F-246. But you cannot have control without legislation?—We will control ourselves; the Magistrates have full power under the law of the land. If there are any abuses, say a man goes and illegally recruits, the Magistrate would be sure to know that. Every emigrant who leaves the district is registered; it is very easy to ascertain where that emigrant has gone.

F-247. Mr. Clow: If the Act were repealed there would be no such thing as illegal recruitment?—Yes, if a man were brought from another garden, would not that be illegal recruiting?

Mr. Clow: Not if he wanted to go.

F-248. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You want some legislation; otherwise it would all be free recruiting?—We do not want Act VI.

F-249. *The Chairman*: I take it you want a new Act cleared of the difficulties of Act VI?—If there is to be any legislation at all; but I do not see why we require an Act at all.

F-250. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Then how can the Magistrate register and how can anyone do anything with regard to controlling recruiting?—Do you say the law of the land cannot check any abuses?

Mr. Clow: No, it cannot.

F-251. *The Chairman*: I think perhaps we had better pursue that matter when we have the Association itself before us at Shillong. The point in which I was at the moment interested was a much smaller one. We were told in some of the recruiting districts that in spite of the greatly improved communications with Assam there was a feeling amongst the people that Assam was so far away that to go to Assam was practically to disappear from India. Can you tell us how far there is communication between the coolies on your estates and their friends and relations in the villages they have left? Is there any free interchange of letters; is there anything done on the tea estates to encourage them to write to their friends and give an account of their well-being here? It appeared to some of us that something might be done by you locally in that respect, so that when people came here to the tea gardens in Assam, their friends and relations at home should not feel that they had lost sight of them?—40,000 go with licenses every year from the tea districts to their own country; that is 4 per cent. of the population.

F-252. But I am talking of those who do not go?—(*Mr. Stuart*) A good deal of communication goes on and a good amount of money is remitted annually.

F-253. You have no machinery on your plantations to help to assist that?—No, no organized machinery, but our staff do assist in writing letters occasionally for the illiterate.

F-254. Do you not think it would be a good thing if you actually promoted and encouraged very free interchange between the people on your plantations and their people in the districts from which they come?—It probably would be a good movement.

F-255. In the long run would it not help your recruiting?—I should think probably it would.

F-256. I see you keep the most careful registers of the coolies on your plantations, but it does not appear that through your organization there is any register in the recruiting districts to show where the coolies are, and certainly not any statement of their well-being; that would seem to indicate a lack of a link in knowledge and understanding between the recruiting district and the working district here in Assam?—In the recruiting district the agent ought to know and does know exactly where the coolies have gone.

F-257. He should know, but the Governments as such in the districts know nothing?—(*Mr. Rayner*) Do they know in any other industries where the emigrants go?

The Chairman: No, but it is rather a surprising thing that they do not except when they go out of India; when they go to Ceylon or Malay they know a good deal, but when they move in India they appear to know nothing?—Is it not exactly the same at home where labour goes where it likes without any registration?

The Chairman: That is so. We all are aware that there is a lingering prejudice against emigration to Assam, due to conditions which we hope have long since passed away, and it would be to the interests of your industry, surely, that every possible step should be taken to remove those prejudices in so far as they linger, in order that the people where there is not a livelihood for them in their own home districts should not be afraid to come to Assam.

F-258. *Mr. Beddow*: Do you think the Tea Districts Labour Association could do more to keep contact between the emigrant and his home rather than the man who comes here?—(*Mr. Stuart*) Yes, I think they could; I do not see there is any great difficulty in that. As far as I learned from the Chairman, he would like to see a register kept and the District Magistrate advised as to where these emigrants are going.

F-259. *The Chairman*: In those recruiting districts where there is still a feeling against emigration to Assam, I am anxious that every possible reasonable step should be taken to remove those prejudices?—Yes; I do not think there could be any objection to asking the Tea Districts Labour Association to keep a register. (*Mr. Gupta*) Whenever they can get employment near their homes they do not like to move from their houses; that is the reason why the number of recruits is falling low. Previously there was practically no industry near their homes; now many industries are developing in those parts; that is the reason why they do not like to come in large numbers.

F-260. Have you here in the Surma Valley any experience of the short-term recruiting that has come into being in the last two or three years?—(*Mr. Stuart*) It has hardly been followed up in the Surma Valley; there have been one or two exceptional cases, but, speaking generally, there is no short-term labour in this Valley.

F-261. Then you cannot give us any actual experience as to the success or otherwise of this 6, 9 and 12 months' recruiting?—No; there is only one garden that I know in the whole of the Surma Valley, that has employed labour for 6 months.

F-262. Did they in that case for the most part go home at the end of 6 months?—They were all repatriated at the end of the 6 months.

F-263. Have you ever considered whether a condition of repatriation, if they so desired, at the end of a term would be for the benefit of your industry or not?—We have considered the subject and I think we are prepared to repatriate people after a period, but of course in this Valley we look more to recruiting labour with a view to colonizing them and settling them; but, on the other hand, there is no objection to repatriating them after a period.

F-264. But if there were a condition of repatriation at the end of two or three years if they desired to go back to their home country, one may presume that a large proportion of them would prefer to stay and take advantage of the settlement that is open to them here; but you have not any definite agreed policy on that question?—No, we have no definite policy with regard to that in this Valley.

F-265. How far is there any primary education carried out by the tea estates?—There is very little carried out by the tea estates; some years ago it was attempted on a good many gardens, but owing to the disinclination of the people to go to school the schools collapsed. Even in the villages I am informed that the Government schools are very badly attended; they have no inclination to go to school.

F-266. Has primary education really had the encouragement of the members of your Association?—Yes, I think so generally.

F-267. If there were schools for the children of the tea garden labourers, do you think that in itself would be an additional inducement for the people to come here?—(*Mr. Rayner*) Many estates have schools kept up by the garden on the estate, but they do not seem to want to go to school; others have what are called subsidized schools, partly maintained by Government and inspected by Government on the estates.

F-268. Is that reluctance on the part of the parents due to the fact that the children are able to earn when they otherwise would be at school?—I think that is what it is. (*Mr. Stuart*) The school is generally held in the evening. A lot of these children are looking after their parents' goats, cows and sheep; I think there would be great difficulty in persuading them to go to school.

F-269. That has been the case in many countries amongst agricultural people in days gone by, but by degrees there has been an increased appreciation of the advantages of education. I take it that you do not at present find that growing appreciation amongst the parents on your tea estates?—No, we do not find the parents supporting us in any way. (*Mr. Gupta*) Many of the gardens have schools, but it will take some time to make these people send their boys to these schools; they are quite reluctant to do so at present.

F-270. *Mr. Beddoe*: I take it not all the children on your garden work?—(*Mr. Stuart*) No.

F-271. Do those who do not work attend school any more readily than those who work?—No; I think they generally like playing in the lines and prefer pitch and toss to going to school.

F-272. Then do you consider that they do not attend school because they want to earn money or from sheer apathy?—Apathy.

F-273. *The Chairman*: I take it from what you have said that although experiments have been made, there is not a general policy of encouraging education?—No, not on the part of the employer.

F-274. *Mr. Clow*: With regard to your garden *sardars*, we have been told in one memorandum by an officer visiting the recruiting districts that instances are very frequent of *sardars* being sent down to recruit after spending a few days in the garden; have you any experience of that?—I do not think that is general though there may be exceptional cases. (*Mr. Rayner*) We very seldom send any *sardar* until he has been 6 months at least on the garden; there may be exceptional cases, but that is done more to keep in touch with the recruiting districts. I know in our discussion that was also brought up, that these people whom we sent back were professional recruiters. That is not so. I have sent away a good many *sardars* and not one has turned out to be a professional man; they were just people who had families in their country, and they were sent back after 6 months or a year to recruit their families, and they did so. I can prove that; I can give you hundreds of instances in the last few years. That statement is not true.

F-275. Can you give us any idea of the proportion of coolies who actually return ultimately to their native districts?—(*Mr. Stuart*) I am afraid we have not got those figures.

F-276. Can you give us a guess? Do the great majority ultimately return?—(*Mr. Rayner*) No, certainly not; they settle in the garden or they settle outside in the *busti*; they remain on the gardens and may afterwards drift off to the *busti*. Ten or 15 per cent. may return to their country but certainly not more.

F-277. Do those find their own way back or are they supplied with their return fare?—Many people after being a certain time on the garden want to go back to their country, and we say: "If you wish to go back, if you have a licence you will be able to get one or two people, your own relations, and send them to the garden." Very often they do so and remain in the country themselves. Sending them to recruit is a form of repatriation.

F-278. Am I to take it, then, that every coolie who returns is furnished with a certificate?—Yes.

F-279. Practically none return who are not furnished with a certificate as a *sardar*?—How can they return otherwise?

F-280. They could return at their own expense?—Some do, but very few I should say; I have not got any figures.

F-281. *The Chairman*: You have told us that out of your 40,000 *sardars*, taking an average per annum, one-third do not return?—I should say approximately one-third do not return.

F-282. Then may we take it that that represents about 13,000 who do not like the life in Assam and who go back as *sardars* as a form of repatriation?—Yes. (*Mr. Stuart*) They do not go back because they do not like the life; they go back because they have money.

F-283. *Mr. Clow*: When you accept that figure of 13,000, you are referring to the whole of Assam?—Yes.

F-284. Of that number a very small proportion goes from this Valley; I think it is one in seven?—Yes, about that; we do not recruit to the same extent as the other Valley.

F-285. *Mr. Saikia*: Do you allow a coolie to take his family to his country when he goes as a *sardar*?—(*Mr. Gupta*) Sometimes he takes his wife with him, not always.

F-286. *Mr. Clow*: As regards wages are we to understand there are two systems in force, a system of *hazira* and *ticca* and a system of unit rates?—I should say the unit system is the system which is now adopted generally.

F-287. The other system has been abandoned altogether?—It is dying out.

F-288. Under the *hazira* system the labourer had to do a fixed task, and then if he wished he could do an additional amount of work?—Yes.

F-289. A higher rate was paid for the *ticca* than for the *hazira*?—Yes.

F-290. Under the unit system the rate is uniform?—Up to a point, and then the rate increases again.

F-291. So that the only difference in practice is that no fixed task is demanded of the labourer?—Yes, that is the idea.

F-292. The rates have not been altered?—Yes, the rates have gone up; we do not get to-day the same amount of work out of a coolie as we did 20 years ago.

F-293. Could you give us roughly the rates now for the main forms of work?—It varies a great deal; for instance, in the rains hoeing is a different task as compared with what it is in the cold weather when the soil is so hard. Again you might compare Mr. Rayner's garden with mine; he might require one class of hoeing in the rains while I might demand another kind.

F-294. Take plucking in the season?—The same thing happens with regard to Mr. Rayner's garden and mine; the rates may vary; I may want a better quality leaf and therefore have got to reduce my task.

F-295. But are not there certain broad rates fairly generally applicable?—It varies tremendously.

F-296. We were told in one garden that the rate was more or less uniform for the more general classes of work?—If you take a large company I should think the rates are uniform. Then if you come to another company which is working on a different basis you may find great variation in the rates, but at the end of the day the pay is practically the same.

F-297. Why was the alteration made to the unit system?—It was considered generally a more equitable arrangement for the coolie; I think he prefers it.

F-298. Has it resulted in his doing less work normally for the garden?—There is less work done to-day by the coolie.

F-299. Is the introduction of the unit rate responsible for the coolie doing less work?—No, not the introduction of the unit system

F-300. It does not result in his coming to work and leaving off after an hour or two before a reasonable day's work has been done?—That is not the unit system, because one or two gardens that still retain the old system are just in the same position.

F-301. *Mr. Beddoes*: Does he earn more to-day than he could earn 10 years ago?—Considerably more.

F-302. Does he do more work for it?—He does less work for it.

F-303. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Will you explain the actual working of the unit system? I understand you do give piece-work for the man or woman to do?—Take hoeing; the task is decided on as the result of our experience. If there is any doubt about the task you generally consult one of your senior *sardars* and fix a rate; a man we will say, for instance, is allowed to hoe 10 *nals* for an anna.

F-304. Therefore he is set a task practically of 10 *nals* for an anna; supposing he only does 8 *nals*?—He will be paid in proportion.

F-305. *Mr. Clow*: Under the old *hazira* system a man had to do a specified quantity, say about 4 annas worth, before he was paid at all?—Not always.

F-306. Generally?—Yes.

F-307. Under the new system it is open to him to stop work after he has earned an anna?—He can do as much work as he likes.

F-308. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How do you pay him if he does 20 *nals*?—He gets 2 annas; we rate it. What we like to see them earning is a minimum of 6 annas a day.

F-309. That would be 60 *nals*?—Say that is 60 *nals*, then if he cares to do more than that he gets double rates; it is a rising scale after earning the rate of wage that we consider is the minimum wage that he should be able to earn in 4 to 5 hours.

F-310. *Mr. Clow*: Under the unit system does the coolie ordinarily do that minimum amount?—He generally does more; the good coolie generally does more.

F-311. Is it possible at all seasons of the year to provide as much work as any man may want?—Yes, always.

F-312. On what principle are the rice lands allocated?—They are allotted to families. I think we have the figures here. You may take it over the entire population of the Surma Valley; you will find they have got about three-quarters of a *keer* per head.

F-313. That will all be held by people who have been some years on the garden?—No, not always.

F-314. I suppose a man who has come fresh from Ranchi cannot expect to be given rice land as soon as he arrives?—In some instances it happens; if he goes to a garden which is being opened out and there is rice land that has not been opened out, in his spare time he cuts that jungle and starts to cultivate it.

F-315. But that is the exception, is it not?—There is a good deal of it goes on.

F-316. The granting of rice land is of very distinct economic advantage, is it not?—Yes; at the rents at which they get it, compared with the rents at which they acquire it from Government, it means a lot of money.

F-317. The income of a man who owns rice land differs very substantially from the income of a man who has none?—That is so.

F-318. The difficulty I feel about the system is that whereas the man who owns rice land goes to his village and says that he is perfectly contented and very well off, the man who owns no rice land is in a very much poorer position, to begin with at any rate?—Yes.

F-319. Does that militate against recruitment?—(*Mr. Rayner*) The older coolie can always look after himself. We look after the new coolie much more than we do the old coolie.

F-320. What do you mean by "look after"?—We look after his pay and welfare. (*Mr. Stuart*) Irrespective of what he does, a new coolie draws his full pay for a certain period. Some gardens allow him full pay for three months.

F-321. You pay him the wage he would receive for his ordinary task?—We pay him what we consider is the wage that he ought to earn, irrespective of what he does.

F-322. The wage that he would earn if he did not do extra work?—Yes.

F-323. Is it not possible that the ordinary coolie, coming here and having heard accounts from his relatives of how you give him land and various other advantages, might be somewhat disillusioned when he found that for some years at any rate he had to depend entirely on the garden?

Mr. Beddoe: Do you find a new coolie inclined to cultivate land in his first year or two?—Not generally.

F-324. *Mr. Clow*: Because he has not the means with which to cultivate it?—It is not so much as that he is disinclined in the first instance to do it. A new coolie does not as a rule get land that has been in cultivation. He has to open it out himself.

F-325. With regard to *faltu* labour I understand that it is nowhere shown in the return?—No, it is not.

F-326. The Government asks for no return in respect of *faltu* labour?—No. I do not think they could demand it. We have no control over it. It comes and goes exactly as it likes.

F-327. The same applies to the coal miner, but the Government demand a return in that case?—It is hardly the same. One is working in a mine in dangerous circumstances, and the other is merely an agriculturist.

F-328. Would it be right to say that in this valley the *faltu* labour is about 10 per cent. of the total?—Yes, approximately.

F-329. Is any *faltu* labour employed in the factories?—No. The factory labour is permanent.

F-330. Does the *faltu* labourer always do a full day's work?—Yes, as a rule.

F-331. Has the repeal of the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act had any appreciable effect?—I do not think it has made any difference to us at all.

F-332. There was very keen opposition among planters generally to the repeal of that Act?—There was at the time, because it was depriving us of any control over the coolie. At present we have no control over our labour.

F-333. But I gather that the effect of the repeal has not been very noticeable?—No.

F-334. *Miss Power*: It has been stated that few gardens have facilities for the education of children and that there ought to be lower primary schools in each district. Can you state what number of gardens in the Surma Valley have their own schools?—I have no idea.

F-335. Is it possible to get that information?—Yes. We will submit it.

F-336. You stated just now that there was encouragement given to the workers to attend schools. In going round various gardens lately we have seen evidence of the very patient educational work that has been done amongst your people in order to get them to take advantage of the medical facilities given. I take it that that must have entailed educational work over a long period. Has the same patient educational effort been given to persuade them to send their children to such schools as are available?—I am afraid the same patient education has not been given.

F-337. If they have responded, as it is clear they have, to the medical facilities given, which must have been very alien to them in the first instance, do you think that if the same educational effort were made by employers to persuade the workers as to the necessity of sending their children to school up to, say, the age of 10 or 11, that over a decade you would get the same response from them?—No, I do not think so, for this reason. When the medical side was taken up 30 years ago, the medical officer had great difficulty, especially when it came to a question of an operation; but the mere fact of an operation having been conducted successfully in a hospital was a great inducement for the next case to come along. Looking at it from an educational point of view, however, it would not have the same effect.

F-338. Would it assist if children up to the age of 10 or 11 were not accepted for work in the tea gardens?—If there were any such restriction, I think it would mean that all the children would go to work in the neighbouring villages.

F-339. *Mr. Beddow*: Have you children under the age of 11 working on the gardens?—No. There are very few under 11.

F-340. *Miss Power*: Do you feel as an Association that no endeavour on your part to persuade the children or the parents to take advantage of educational facilities would be of any use?—I do not think it would be of any use.

F-341. Are you really as pessimistic about it as that?—I am, personally.

F-342. You think compulsion is the only remedy?—(*Dr. Ramsay*) From my own experience I would say that there is a demand for education by coolie children after they reach the age of about 12 years, but not before. A good deal of education goes on throughout the coolie lines at night by the Babus.

F-343. Are these recognized schemes of education, or is it a voluntary act on the part of the garden babus?—It is voluntary. A good deal is done by the tea estate establishments in that direction when the children reach the age of about 12.

F-344. You refer to the question of optional medical examination. You also imply that medical examination does in fact take place in most cases; but if it is optional there must be a certain number of recruits who come here who, from the very beginning, are physically unsuited to the work?—(*Mr. Stuart*) They should not be, because as a rule the instructions to the local agent are to have them all medically examined before they come.

F-345. What is the idea of leaving anything so important as the initial medical examination optional?—There is no law that can compel a coolie to be medically examined.

F-346. *Mr. Beddow*: Although it is optional, are not all coolies medically examined?—I have never heard of a case of coolies not being medically examined.

F-347. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What is the practice in your gardens, Mr. Rayner?—(*Mr. Rayner*) We always have our coolies medically examined before they are sent up. They are also inoculated and vaccinated before they come up.

F-348. Is that the usual procedure for all the gardens?—Yes, in 99 per cent. of the gardens.

F-349. *Miss Power*: You say that no married woman or minor is accepted at a dépôt without the consent of the husband or guardian. What steps are taken to find out whether the consent of the husband or guardian has been obtained?—(*Mr. Stuart*) That is obtained by the local agent in the dépôt. A peon is invariably sent out to the village from where these people come in order to find out if the woman is willing to go, or if the parents, if she has any, are willing to let her go.

F-350. Is that an invariable practice?—Yes. The Superintendent, Tea Districts Labour Association, Calcutta, will be able to tell you better than I can, but I think it is invariably the case. It is the rule in the case of a single woman.

F-351. The Bishop of Ranchi in his evidence has made certain allegations on which it would be interesting to have your comment. He says: "Family life often suffers from the emigration of young girls who, unmarried, are enticed and disappear among the mixed population of the gardens. Married girls are enticed by grand promises and are often lost to their husbands. Young girls, married or unmarried, when recruited for Assam against the will or without obtaining the consent of the parent or husband are taken by devious ways to the dépôt, and are often passing in the open with the *sardar* who may easily under the circumstances commit immoral action with these girls." He also refers to the changing of names, and so forth. As allegations of this kind have been made by a presumably responsible person, it would be very interesting if you could give us your comments on them?—It can easily be found out through our Association where a particular girl has gone to. If there is any doubt about it anybody can write up here and make enquiries through the Magistrate.

F-352. There is no reason for anybody to be lost to his or her family?—No.

F-353. *Mr. Clow*. Even if they have come up here under a wrong name?—If a parent complains that a girl has been sent up to a garden, and the girl has changed her name, the girl can be described. It is very easy for any one to trace that girl, because it is known how many girls have been sent up during the week or fortnight, and the Magistrates can be circularized to find out her whereabouts. There is no difficulty in tracing a girl. They know exactly to what garden the girl has gone. The local agent can tell you at once.

F-354. The father cannot tell which agency she has gone to?—Yes, he can.

F-355. How?—There is only one central dépôt in each circle through which she can be sent and all particulars can be found out there.

F-356. *Sir Alexander Murray*: If the girl has gone through the local recruiting dépôt to a tea garden it is possible to trace her?—Yes.

F-357. But if instead of going through a local recruiting dépôt she has been taken away to the Punjab then she cannot be traced?—No.

F-358. *Miss Power*: Have you ever had any cases in which you have had to return women or girl recruits, because you have found that they were illegally recruited?—It is a very rare thing. (*Mr. Gupta*) I have had a single case in my 34 years' experience.

F-359. You say: "Tea estates are inspected by the Magistrate, and if an estate is unhealthy, also by the Civil Surgeon." It appears that the Civil Surgeon only enters into the matter when somebody other than a doctor has decided that an estate is unhealthy. On what basis is that decision formed?—On the mortality statistics.

F-360. What happens when a garden is disclosed as unhealthy?—(*Dr. Ramsay*) The Government can close it if they care to.

F-361. Your Association has had no experience of gardens in this Valley being classified as unhealthy?—I have had two gardens classified as unhealthy.

F-362. What happened when these gardens were declared to be unhealthy?—The Deputy Commissioner and the Civil Surgeon write reports on the garden.

F-363. After such a report is made is there any obligation on the owner of the garden to take definite steps?—I made a thorough investigation as to the cause of the high death-rate on the two particular gardens I have mentioned, and I found that the actual factor was malaria. It was put down to other things, such as hookworm in the first instance, but in the end it was found that the actual factor was malaria.

F-364. You refer to the "extras" given to the workers over and above their cash wages, and you say that these constitute a large increase on the actual cash wage. Is it possible for you to give an assessment of the cash value of these extra concessions given to the workers?—(Mr. Stuart) Yes. Over the entire Surma Valley three-fourths of a *keer* of rice land is given to each coolie, the production of which may be computed to be from Rs. 18 to Rs. 20, representing Re. 1.8 per month per head of the total population. In addition, it is calculated, on a conservative estimate, that the value of the cows, goats, buffaloes, pigs, ponies, bullocks, etc., is equivalent to 8 annas per coolie.

F-365. Sir Alexander Murray: When you say "Value," do you mean for grazing purposes?—I mentioned ponies. Coolies have purchased ponies and have made money out of those ponies by making them pull trolleys to the railway station—a very valuable source of income to them. In addition they make an appreciable sum by selling milk in Silchar from their cows. Then the homestead produce per head per month we estimate to be 8 annas. They grow a good deal of vegetables. Putting all these things together we make it out to be that, in addition to his cash wages, a coolie earns by concessions Rs. 4.8 per month per head.

F-366. Man, woman and child?—The total population on the gardens.

F-367. Mr. Beddoe: Of the total population, 58 per cent. is on the labour force, which almost doubles your figures?—Yes.

F-368. Miss Power: Will you let us have a statement of the cash value of these concessions?—Yes, I will send it in.

F-369. You say: "It is considered that increased earnings result in a lowering of efficiency." Will you explain what you mean by that?—(Mr. Rayner) We do not get the same quality of work done for the amount of money we pay.

F-370. Mr. Clow: But money has depreciated very largely since the time you are speaking of?—We have to take an inferior quality of work for the amount of money we give.

F-371. Sir Alexander Murray: Do you suggest that if you double a man's earnings you halve his efficiency?—I say he will do less for it.

F-372. Will you explain that?—A man does not want to do more than a certain amount of work. He wants the rest of the time for leisure, and for doing his own cultivation.

F-373. Mr. Beddoe: He works up to a certain amount of money and, having earned that money, he stops work?—Yes.

F-374. The Chairman: In your case particularly, the man having his own land to turn to?—Exactly.

F-375. Miss Power: You are not implying that the quality of the work which is actually done has deteriorated?—We have to take inferior work to what he did before.

F-376. Dealing with the question of labour agreements between employers, and with the freedom of movement of the labourers, is there any agreement between tea garden managers as to accepting a worker from a neighbouring tea garden who may wish to change his garden?—(Mr. Stuart) There are labour rules between the managers, which in no way affects the free movement of the coolie.

F-377. You agree between yourselves that you will not entice each other's coolies?—Yes.

F-378. Supposing a coolie without incitement wishes for some reason to change his garden, if he goes to a neighbouring garden will he be refused work?—No; but the manager of that garden has to pay to the manager of the other garden the expenses of the man's recruitment.

F-379. Is the coolie always at liberty to go to any other garden if the manager of that garden is willing to pay the expenses of his recruitment?—Yes.

F-380. Or will the manager say "I cannot afford to pay your recruiting expenses at the moment and therefore I cannot take you"?—It is very seldom that he would say that.

F-381. You are prepared to say that at the moment a coolie, if he wishes, can go to any garden he wants without restriction?—Yes.

F-382. Mrs. Ataur Rahman: May we know what have been the declared dividends on the gardens for the last ten years?—You will get that information in Calcutta.

F-383. Yesterday in going round the gardens we came across a coolie woman who said that she pruned 70 large bushes or 100 small bushes for 4 annas. Can a coolie woman do that amount of work in one day and also extra work?—She can do it but it depends on whether she wants to do it. The majority go away after earning merely what they want to earn.

F-384. They told us that they could not do more than that amount of work?—They can easily do it in a very reasonable number of hours.

F-385. *Mr. Beddow*: Is there a disinclination on their part to earn more money at certain times of the year?—Yes, in the cold weather.

F-386. Why?—Because the days are shorter and the weather is better and they prefer to go and amuse themselves. I have some figures here showing the extraordinarily high pay they can earn when the plucking season is on. On one estate a woman earned in April Rs. 6-6-9; in May Rs. 18-14-3; in July Rs. 21-8-6; in August Rs. 24; in September Rs. 19; in October Rs. 19 and in November Rs. 14, and her total working days were only 195.

F-387. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What were her total earnings for these 195 working days?—Rs. 130-3-9.

F-388. *Mrs. Ataur Rahman*: What does the average woman get?—The average for the whole district for the year is Rs. 8-11-2 per month. I can give you figures of the earnings of a dozen women during the plucking season:—The first one earned Rs. 130-3-9 for 195 working days; the next earned Rs. 136-5-9 for 195 days; the next Rs. 119-4-6 for 190 days; the next Rs. 97-7-6 for 187 days; the next Rs. 108-3-3 for 199 days; the next Rs. 107-14-6 for 196 days; the next Rs. 103-1-3 for 200 days; the next Rs. 86 odd for 175 days; the next Rs. 118 for 180 days; the next Rs. 111 for 192 days; the next Rs. 113 for 191 days; and the next Rs. 107 for 199 days.

F-389. *Mr. Beddow*: These earnings are open to anybody as they choose to avail themselves of them?—Yes.

F-390. *The Chairman*: How many hours of work would these high earnings represent?—Seven or eight hours for 6 days a week.

F-391. *Mrs. Ataur Rahman*: You refer to the increase in wages since 1899; but the cost of living has considerably increased also. Twenty years ago you could get 20 seers of rice for a rupee. Nowadays you can only get 5 to 6 seers for a rupee?—(*Mr. Rayner*) I can go back 36 years and I never remember the time when you could get 20 seers for a rupee.

F-392. Twenty years ago one could get a lot of fish for an anna which now you cannot get for 8 annas. Vegetables and *dal* have also gone up in price?—(*Mr. Stuart*) The coolie grows a good deal of his own vegetables.

F-393. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Have you any figures dealing with the cost of living?—Yes.

The Chairman: Will you put those in?—Yes. (List handed in.)

F-394. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What does it come to?—For a single man it comes out to Rs. 8-7-0; for a woman with one child of from 8 to 11 years old it comes out to Rs. 9-8-6; and for a man and a woman with a child it comes out to Rs. 17-15-6.

F-395. *Mr. Beddow*: From the Government return, the total wages earned throughout the year taken over the total population, work out to 3,276 rupees per head, whereas the cost of living is roughly Rs. 8 per head. Where does the balance come from?—From the garden property.

F-396. It does not come from outside?—No.

F-397. Therefore the value of the non-cash payment is equivalent to the balance?—Yes.

F-398. *Rev. Saikia*: May I know if every family on the gardens has paddy lands for cultivation?—(*Mr. Gupta*) In many gardens they have. (*Mr. Stuart*) As we have already stated, the average comes to three-quarters of a *kair* per head of population in the Surma Valley.

F-399. You have already said that when new comers come they do not do anything for the first year. After the first year is it possible for them to clear up the jungle and begin cultivation?—(*Mr. Gupta*) Many do. They get the land free for three years in case they cut off the jungle. (*Mr. Stuart*) There are not many; if land is available it is possible, and some of them do it.

F-400. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What rent do you charge from them?—A very nominal charge, 12 annas per acre.

F-401. *Mr. Beddow*: What is the Government rate?—(*Mr. Rayner*) Rs. 6-13 per acre. (*Mr. Stuart*) That is the revenue that the Government derives.

F-402. *Rev. Saikia*: Will you tell us whether there is a school in every garden and whether there are teachers for those schools?—(*Mr. Gupta*) We have already promised to send a list showing the gardens which have schools. I may say that many gardens have provided buildings for schools and have employed qualified teachers.

F-403. Is it possible for children, who work in the fields all the day, to go to night schools?—(*Mr. Stuart*) It is quite possible.

F-404. Will you tell us whether pure water is supplied to the coolies?—(*Mr. Rayner*) The water supply on the tea estates is remarkably good; most of the gardens supply pure and filtered water.

F-405. When the *sardar* goes out for recruiting, does his wife generally go with him?—(*Mr. Stuart*) No; she probably does not want to go because she has children to look after.

F-406. Does it generally happen that the *sardar* who goes out returns with another wife while his wife on the garden also marries a second time?—There may be isolated cases; it is not common.

F-407. *Col. Russell*: In the first place, I will deal with the question of housing of the coolies. We saw certain types of houses during our inspection and I would like Dr. Ramsay to give his opinion to the Commission as to the types which are most suitable for these coolies and whether the coolies are contented with the types that have been put up?—(*Dr. Ramsay*) In 1917 my predecessor Dr. Glover was highly interested in the subject and he built five brick houses covered with shingles. The idea was to cut out the recurring expenditure on repairs and to provide decent accommodation for the coolies. This experiment was carried out on the Labac Tea Estate, and within two years, during the influenza epidemic, there was great mortality in these houses and the coolies immediately deserted them. We were unable to get them back to these houses and so we reverted to the type of houses that you saw. We had to resort to corrugated iron sheets for covering because jungle produce is difficult to get. The coolies seem to prefer this type of houses and we consider it quite healthy.

F-408. Was it not merely an accident that the influenza epidemic occurred and made them prejudiced against that type of houses?—Yes, but they said that those houses were infested with ghosts and they refused to live in them.

F-409. We saw also on Saturday various lines of houses being put up with iron frames for roofing. Will the coolies make use of these houses?—We hope so.

F-410. You have no assurance on that point?—No.

F-411. Perhaps *Mr. Stuart* might say whether he thinks that it is advisable to put up such houses?—(*Mr. Stuart*) We have put up similar houses, though we have not adopted corrugated iron roofing but asbestos cement sheets, and the coolies have taken to those houses quite kindly.

F-412. Have you any reason to suspect that this new type of houses has any effect in increasing the amount of respiratory diseases?—(*Dr. Ramsay*) No.

F-413. So that this new type of house which is perhaps more stable and requires less repairs is quite a suitable type?—Yes, we think so.

F-414. As regards the general sanitation of the lines, what methods have been adopted by you to improve the sanitation of the lines?—The lines are cleaned daily.

F-415. You have no definite system of drainage, for instance, the removal of nightsoil by drainage?—No.

F-416. There is also no definite policy as regards construction of latrines for the coolies?—Not in the lines. We have them in the hospital, but we find that they are not popular. The only popular system is that which is in vogue in Doom-Dooma; they have the septic tank system.

F-417. That has proved satisfactory?—Very satisfactory.

F-418. Do you think that such a system might be introduced into other gardens with advantage?—I am asking this question because it is said in the memorandum of the Indian Tea Association that as regards conservancy little progress is recorded?—Certainly. I am quite sure it is going to come along soon.

F-419. It has been said to us frequently that coolies would not use latrines even if they were provided. Is that your opinion?—That is my opinion. The coolies object to the present type of latrines. If you have the septic tank system, which is a clean system, I have no doubt that it will become very popular with the coolies.

F-420. So that if you provide decent latrines and keep them decent there will be no difficulty in the coolies making use of them?—No.

F-421. You would therefore recommend a flush-out system with septic tanks?—Yes, I would.

F-422. With regard to diet, can you give us any information as to the articles of diet that are used by the coolies in the tea estates?—I have got here a list of my hospital diet. (The list was handed in.)

F-423. Do you consider the diet of the ordinary coolie a satisfactory diet or not?—I do.

F-424. You think he gets a proper supply of what are known as vitamins?—I do.

F-425. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you think it is a physiologically balanced diet?—Yes.

F-426. *Col. Russell*: Various statements about the milk that is produced by these coolies have been made. I think Mr. Stuart said that they even sell milk. Do the coolies use milk themselves?—They do to a large extent. They have large herds of cows.

F-427. You would, I presume, support the opinion that the children on the gardens look well because they do get a proper supply of milk?—Yes.

F-428. In the same way they get a proper supply of vegetables because they grow these for themselves?—Yes.

F-429. So that from these two points of view at least the diet is a physiologically and properly balanced diet?—Yes.

F-430. With regard to diseases, I understand that you deal with your statistics of diseases from the general point of view; you do not deal with a particular disease in itself?—Quite so.

F-431. You prefer to do this in estimating the health conditions of the estates?—Yes.

F-432. What is the reason for taking the general disease rate rather than, for instance, the malarial rate?—Because in the diagnosis of malarial cases I have to be entirely dependent on the opinion of my Indian establishment. If we control the incidence of malaria efficiently, we should by this means reduce the total sick-rate, and this has actually happened.

F-433. So that you would not deal specifically, for instance, with cholera, with hookworm and with malaria but you would take the whole group as a group in order that you might get a better idea as to the health conditions of your coolies?—Yes.

F-434. Can you give any comparative statistics for individual gardens in which your anti-malarial work has been carried out?—I can give the figures for the Bandu and the Labac Tea Gardens that were examined by the Commission. In 1927 the total sickness was 14,000 and 17,000, respectively, and it was reduced to 9,281 and 8,840.

F-435. Are you satisfied then that you are on the right lines in your anti-malarial work in improving the health conditions of the coolies on these estates?—I think so.

F-436. *The Chairman*: Do I take it that the full effect of your work has not yet been shown?—Quite so.

F-437. Three years is a short time?—Yes; we prefer to take a five years period.

F-438. Within that period you anticipate a further reduction in your total sickness rate?—I do.

F-439. *Col. Russell*: Malaria, we may take it, is generally prevalent all over the gardens?—No. On the low lying gardens there is very little malaria while the high lying gardens are intensively malarial.

F-440. Do the low lying gardens generally have a lower death-rate than the higher gardens?—Yes.

F-441. Can you give us figures of death-rates and birth-rates of a group of gardens representing both areas?—If you take the Bandu garden that you inspected you will see that in the five-year period 1922-26 there were 30 more deaths than births. In the high lying gardens there is usually a higher death-rate than birth-rate.

F-442. In the low lying gardens?—There is a higher birth-rate.

F-443. Are you prepared to guarantee your statistics?—Yes.

F-444. How do you manage to get them?—We take an annual census.

F-445. We have had some difficulty in getting statistics that are accurate and reliable. How is it that you can say that your figures are both reliable and accurate?—Because some years ago I dismissed three doctors for submitting inaccurate statistics, and now they submit correct statistics, and I also get the complete support of the management.

F-446. You are quite prepared to swear by your figures?—Yes.

F-447. Could you let us have the birth-rate and death-rate for the gardens under your control for the five years before and after you took up their control?—I have got here the figures for 1922-26.

F-448. And for the last three years?—I have got figures for 1927 and 1928, but I have not collected them for 1929.

F-449. After you collect them you can send them to the Commission?—Yes.

F-450. You say that cholera is endemic in Assam. Do you have frequent outbreaks in your gardens?—Not since we adopted the prophylactic treatment and chlorination of wells.

F-451. You chlorinate the wells every day?—Yes.

F-452. How is the accuracy of your chlorination method tested?—We have tested our wells, but we cannot test them individually daily. We estimate how much would be required by Horrocks' box.

F-453. And it has shown that you get successful results?—Yes.

F-454. By inoculating the coolies and by chlorinating the wells you more or less get rid of cholera and you do not consider it a very great danger?—Quite so. During the months of March, April and May we pay particular attention and have an intensive chlorination of water.

F-455. Do you do your inoculation before the outbreak of cholera?—Yes.

F-456. How do you persuade the coolies to get themselves inoculated without the prevalence of cholera?—There is no trouble about it; the coolie accepts it freely. Though it is an expensive method, we give it by the mouth.

F-457. Does hookworm trouble you much?—I was under the impression that it was a very serious factor, but I found that it was a common factor throughout the estates and was not really an important factor at all.

F-458. Almost all the coolies that you get from Bihar and Orissa and Bengal are infected with hookworm. Are they treated before they come up to the gardens here?—I do not think they are.

F-459. Have you hookworm disease here?—No. What we believed to be hookworm we now find to be chronic dysentery or malarial infection.

F-460. Do you not think that the non-existence of hookworm may be due to the fact that the coolies are well fed?—That is probable.

F-461. With regard to maternity benefits, I find that the memorandum from the Indian Tea Association states that the expectant mother is allowed leave on full pay for a period of three or four months. Is that generally the case in all estates?—Yes.

F-462. The expectant mother is looked upon as a valuable citizen then?—Yes.

F-463. Do you think that it would be necessary in these circumstances to introduce what is known as a maternity benefit scheme?—(*Mr. Stuart*) No. I think the benefits that are derived now are probably more than any legislation would give them.

F-464. What exactly do you give in an individual case; it is not quite clear as to what you give?—It varies in gardens. For instance, one garden gives Rs. 5 a month.

F-465. For how many months?—From the time the woman is certified pregnant and unfit for work until such time she is certified that she can go to work again.

F-466. Is certification done by the doctor?—Yes.

F-467. For how many months would that go on?—Probably for a period of three or four months altogether.

F-468. Do you have any midwives or trained *dais* on your estates to conduct these cases?—We have no trained midwives; the ordinary coolie attends to these cases.

F-469. You have not made any effort to introduce trained midwives for conducting these cases?—No. (*Mr. Rayner*) I have got one undergoing training in the hospital for work on the estate.

F-470. So that you cannot tell us just now whether that scheme is going to be a success?—No.

F-471. But I take it that your intention is to extend that scheme if it is a success?—Yes.

F-472. Is it easy to get women to take up that work here?—It is very difficult.

F-473. What class of women could you recruit for that kind of work?—Only lower caste people will do it, and sometimes Muhammadans, but very few high caste Hindus will do it.

F-474. Do you think that the coolie women will make use of the services of these trained midwives?—Yes.

F-475. Is there any other form of welfare work done on the gardens?—(*Mr. Stuart*) Yes. In most of the gardens after the birth of the child a bonus for the birth is allowed and subsequently after a period another bonus is given.

F-476. In addition to this expenditure that might be included under maternity benefits, is there any other form of general welfare work that is being done in these estates?—All the children get blankets free of charge. If the mother is unable to procure milk, it is supplied by the estate free of charge. The mother also gets a blanket.

F-477. Have you, for instance, given recreation facilities?—Many gardens have football teams.

F-478. And cinemas?—Yes; in the cold weather a touring company comes round.

F-479. You pay for that?—The estates pay for it.

F-480. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do the wives of managers take interest in baby clinics or social work?—Some do.

F-481. *Col. Russell*: Have you got any child welfare centres in the Surma Valley?—No.

F-482. I think you wanted to hand in a statement on the conduct of midwifery cases, giving the figures of maternal mortality?—Yes, it is here. I have also a statement giving infant mortality figures.

F-483. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you include the still-births?—If a child lives even for one minute we include it, but we do not include premature births.

F-484. *Col. Russell*: With regard to general medical facilities, I think the Commission is very much interested in your central hospital and the way in which you have grouped your gardens in order that serious cases could be transferred to the central hospital. I take it that it is with your entire approval that this central hospital has been arranged?—Yes.

F-485. Is it the opinion of your managers that a central hospital is the best type of medical institution to have on a group of estates?—As far as I can make out, all the managers are in full agreement with the principle.

F-486. I take it it is much more easy to treat patients from a group of gardens in a central institution than to have a dozen smaller and less efficient institutions scattered all over the area?—Quite so.

F-487. Would it be possible to introduce that scheme into other groups of estates not necessarily under the same management?—(*Mr. Stuart*) It would be very difficult.

F-488. But would it be advisable?—It would be advisable, but I think the work will be an extremely difficult one.

F-489. Why do you say it will be so difficult?—In the first place, who is going to supply the necessary labour for that?

F-490. Surely the cost of the whole central hospital could be easily worked out year by year and the expenses divided in proportion to the number of cases treated, or in proportion to the population of each estate?—My practical experience is that it is difficult to have such central hospitals associated with a number of agencies.

F-491. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You have at present a European doctor representing nine different agencies, is it not?—Yes.

F-492. If that is so, can you not get another doctor to work on the same lines?—I would like to see that done, but I think it would be very very difficult.

F-493. *Col. Russell*: But you admit that the system is one to be accepted?—Yes.

F-494. In Java and Sumatra on the rubber plantations such a system prevails, and it seems to work very well. Do you think that the difficulties here would be insuperable?—No, I would not say that.

F-495. But you would not like to face them?—I would not like to have the management of them.

Mr. Beddoe: Each managing agent may have different ideas on the subject.

Col. Russell: Yes, but that is a question of education of the managing agents.

F-496. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Would the roads and distances lend themselves to the establishment of such central hospitals?—That would be a factor to be carefully studied.

F-497. *Col. Russell*: You have got tramways now?—Not in our district. Only at certain times of the year you can have transport by motor lorries; at other times you cannot get over the roads.

F-498. I was referring to the conditions in Java and Sumatra. There they have tramways fitted with ambulance cars which connect up outlying estates with the central hospital, etc. This system seems to work very well and there does not seem to me to be any reason why a similar system should not be adopted here?—I am afraid you have not seen the roads here during rains.

Col. Russell: There may be physical difficulties which I am not aware of.

F-499. *Mr. Cliff*: I take it that Dr. Ramsay is representing the Labac Medical Practice and not the Surma Valley Association?—(*Rr. Ramsay*) That is so.

F-500. I want to ask Dr. Ramsay whether the medical practice that he is now covering is not really equivalent to a board of health?—In the practice I now cover it is one agency house, and I deal directly as manager with that agency house.

F-501. The practical effects may be taken to be that of a board of health for the agency that you cover?—I represent the agency from a medical point of view.

F-502. You deal with sanitation?—I deal with the health of the coolies and give my opinion on that to the agency house.

F-503. You run a hospital for the whole of the gardens?—Yes.

F-504. Can you tell us the number of gardens and the population, so that they can be got on record?—The population is roughly 18,000 coolies and the number of gardens is 18.

F-505. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What will be the distance covered?—The area covered is, I think, 17 miles by 7 miles as the crow flies.

F-506. *Mr. Cliff*: Speaking from the health point of view is there any reason why this practice should not be extended over the whole of the gardens?—Some years ago I suggested to the President of the Assam Medical Association the formation of an Indian Tea Association Medical Service. This idea was enlarged upon by Sir Henry Symons who is now the Director-General of the Indian Medical Service, to include jute and coal industries and to make it a sort of Indian commercial medical service. With a properly constituted medical service you can do all those things, but with the present multiplicity of agencies it will be very difficult to have any system except the system you now see.

F-507. I want to ask Mr. Stuart whether the branch which he represents would oppose a board of health for this area?—(*Mr. Stuart*) I do not quite understand what the duties of the board of health are.

F-508. May I put it this way? In many of the memoranda and in some of the answers to questions by Col. Russell, there are two words used, and used with considerable force. One is *many* of the gardens, and the other is *most* of the gardens. It is being represented to the Commission and the Commission have got some valuable evidence with regard to the work of Dr. Ramsay's practice. Cannot the exemplary conditions which you put in front of the Commission from Dr. Ramsay's practice be put into operation over the whole of the gardens?—It might be done, but it will have to be done through agency houses of course.

F-509. For instance, on the question of wages, I notice the Indian Tea Association saying in their memorandum that we better ask the up-country Associations. What I want to ask is whether this branch as a branch with practical experience of tea plantations would oppose a board of health on the lines of Dr. Ramsay's practice?—No, I do not think so.

F-510. May I put it a little stronger? Would you welcome it?—(Mr. Rayner) Yes, if controlled by ourselves.

F-511. Dealing with the question of control, are you able to bring in the worst gardens?—I think we are.

F-512. You are able to compel the whole of the tea planters to follow a practice of this character?—(Mr. Stuart) If the Calcutta Agency Houses and Proprietors have agreed to it they would insist upon their estates following it.

F-513. Assuming as is often the case there are individuals who will not come in, would you be in favour of statutory compulsion to compel them to come in?—We represent only 90 per cent. of the plantations and we can therefore only insist upon this 90 per cent. and not upon the remaining 10 per cent.

F-514. That is my point; I want to know how you can get that 10 per cent. in. In order to get into operation a practice which you put before the Commission as exemplary, whether you would welcome that the whole of the gardens should be brought up to that standard?—Yes, if we could get the 10 per cent.

F-515. If that would have to be done by statutory compulsion would you welcome that?—I do not think we will be in favour of any statutory compulsion.

F-516. How is it to be brought about without statutory compulsion?—We are an association.

F-517. But then you have a number of people outside?—(Mr. Rayner) I think we can get those people in.

F-518. My difficulty with regard to much of the evidence is this: it comes back to the words "many" and "most." And the evidence put before us leaves us with the inference that there are some worse than the best and there are some not too good. The burden of my question is whether what has been found to be beneficial should not be compulsory on the whole. Is there any reason why it should not be so?—(Mr. Stuart) We would welcome it certainly, but there are many interested parties and I do not know what the Agents at Calcutta would have to say about it.

F-519. At the moment you are speaking for your Association and other people will have to be consulted separately?—Yes.

F-520. You were answering questions by Col. Russell with regard to maternity benefit and you used the work "many" again and said that because of the conditions which obtained here statutory maternity benefit was not necessary. Would there be any objection to it being a stated condition in the terms of employment that maternity benefit of a set standard should be given?—Personally I do not see that there is any difficulty about that. I think it was very fully discussed in the Legislative Assembly some years ago. The whole difficulty was the question of distance for the organization to pay up the amounts.

F-521. Your Association at the moment say that a statutory Act is unnecessary and possibly difficult and undesirable. But on many of your gardens you reach a certain standard. Is there any objection on the part of your Association that in respect of all the gardens it should be a condition of service?—I cannot see any difficulty there. It will probably be run better by ourselves.

F-522. I am not concerned at the moment whether you run it or not; what I am concerned with is that it should be common and uniform to all employers?—(Mr. Gupta) It depends on the condition of each individual estate.

F-523. You view the question from the standpoint of the financial liability involved on each garden. Will the tax that would be involved in the provision of maternity benefit be of such a serious nature that the industry cannot do it?

Mr. Beddow: It may be that individual gardens cannot do it.

F-524. *Mr. Cliff*: You say that because individual gardens cannot do it, it should not be common. Is not that the escape that all the worst gardens have? You have got to face the question of malaria; are they to have an escape because they plead financial inability?—(*Mr. Rayner*) Would any such compulsion with regard to the control of malaria be restricted to the tea gardens only; would it not be extended to the villages also; would it not apply to other parts of the Province and to other industries also?

F-525. With regard to that, the Commission has to deal with many other forms of labour; at the moment we are dealing with the labour you represent?—If Government could do it for the Province as a whole and for all the villages I think we would be quite prepared to fall in. But until then we will be doing all we possibly can. I certainly think that everybody who has seen Dr. Ramsay's work will agree that he is carrying on very good work.

F-526. I am sure the Commission will welcome the kind of work that one sees Dr. Ramsay doing. I am taking it away from any question of higher grounds and asking whether it has not got an economic value?—Yes.

F-527. If so, why should it not be put through the whole of the industry?—Yes.

F-528. Would you be prepared with regard to the people who are not at the moment willing to come in that there should be compulsion?—I should say, no compulsion; but put it to the industry and see what they do first. I think the industry is quite capable of doing it without compulsion.

F-529. For yourself would you say that with regard to the 90 per cent. you represent you would oppose compulsion from the Association?—Yes.

F-530. How would you deal with the 10 per cent. who are not members of your Association?—That is a matter for discussion.

F-531. You have no views at the moment?—We have no control over them. (*Mr. Stuart*) One objection with regard to compulsion is this. Suppose a couple from the adjoining village wants to come and settle in our gardens. Next year they would become entitled to the benefits of maternity allowance. Suppose they say we wish to go back to our village. Unless the same thing is done in the neighbouring villages there would be some difficulty.

F-532. That is a matter of employment. I am dealing at the moment with the ten per cent. outside your Association. What do you propose to do with regard to that 10 per cent. upon whom you exercise no control?—I think it is a matter to be discussed. We can find some way out of the difficulty.

F-533. If you cared to give the Commission your considered view that would be welcome?—Yes, I will do so.

F-534. Dr. Ramsay, on the question of the diet of the coolies you have handed in a statement?—(*Dr. Ramsay*) Yes, those are the various articles of diet which they take.

F-535. Is that taken over the whole of the 14 or 18 gardens?—Yes, that is the diet of the coolies I come across in my practice.

F-536. You have investigated it and I think you said that it was a suitable diet or a good diet?—A balanced diet.

F-537. Have the people selected this diet with guidance or without guidance?—Without guidance. It is the normal diet.

F-538. Have you seen the figures put forward by Mr. Stuart and Mr. Rayner with regard to the cost of diet?—Yes, I have.

F-539. Have you been consulted with regard to that estimate?—No.

F-540. Do you think that that diet can be bought for the amount of money set out by Mr. Stuart?—I should think so. We worked this figure out once with our Indian establishment and they arrived at the same figures independently.

F-541. Could we have those figures now?—I will send them to the Commission.

F-542. With regard to hospital diet have you figures regarding its cost?—Yes, I will send that also to the Commission.

F-543. With regard to the children in the hospital I notice you give glaxo, cow and gates food, virol and so on. If the children are out of hospital can they obtain this food?—Any child can always get it in the hospital.

F-544. Is that by application?—There is no trouble whatever. They come of their free will and if the child is weak we look after it.

F-545. Can the child go on right through the first year of its life on this kind of food; can the mother get this whenever she wants it?—More than the first year of life; any year of life.

F-546. With regard to these children what are the age-limits up to which you call them children?—(Mr. Stuart) Up to 12 years we call them children.

F-547. We have a memorandum of evidence put in by a tea garden manager by name Mr. C. K. Bezaruuah of the Boloma Tea Estate. He says that only children between 7 and 9 go to help their parents in plucking, weeding and manuring which are suitable for their constitutions. Exactly at what age are the children employed?—I think about 9; they start with 9.

F-548. Is it true as this manager states and some one stated the other day that the parents take their children with them to do this kind of work? I was on a garden the other day and the manager said: "We do not employ them, but their parents bring them here to help them." With regard to your district do children go with their parents to work in the garden?—Not very many. There may be one or two coming out because the mother does not want to leave them at home.

F-549. With regard to the returns that we have here may we take it that the children are employed from 10 years of age direct by the garden?—Yes, from 10 to 12.

F-550. Once the child is over 12 it is not called a child?—No.

F-551. *Mr. Beddoe*: How do you decide whether the child is an adult?—By long practical experience.

F-552. *Mr. Cliff*: I saw some registers on the gardens the other day containing columns for men, women and boys and girls. I have not been able to ascertain when a boy or a girl becomes a man or woman.—I think 16 is taken to be the age. That is the case in Government returns also.

F-553. *Sir Alexander Murray*: That is for recruiting purposes?—Also for death returns.

F-554. *Mr. Cliff*: Is it the case that in the returns of wages also everyone over 16 is included either as a man or woman?—Yes.

F-555. According to your memorandum the total area of cultivated land is 40,641 acres. That is dealing with land let out by the plantations and not by any other body. Mr. Clow was asking you how you allotted those lands. I am not clear how a tea garden worker gets land. As far as I can see there are more tea garden workers than there is land for them. On what basis do they get land?—There is no definite basis. For instance, a man in his spare time opens up an acre from virgin jungle; he is allowed that acre. That man might die and the land becomes vacant. Another man applies for it and he is given half an acre and the other half is given to another man. I do not think there is any definite arrangement; it is all done by the management.

F-556. Are there some gardens in the valley that have no spare lands?—Yes, in some gardens there are no rice lands.

F-557. What is the maximum holding that a tea garden worker has?—(Mr. Rayner) we do not allow too much to a single worker. If he clears up 2, 3 or 4 acres he is allowed to have it for two or three years; then a portion of it is taken away from him and allotted to another.

F-558. You have got registers of your holders. You have given us the number of acres. Could you give us the number of holders?—Each estate will have a different register. I could tell you the number of holders.

F-559. Also the maximum holding?—In my estate we have 400 acres of rice land all together. That gives us 1,200 *keers*, or an average of 2 *keers* for a family. We give about 2 to 3 *keers* to a family according to the number of members in the family.

F-560. Is there any agreement between the tea garden worker and the planter with regard to this holding?—There is no agreement.

F-561. What right has he in the land; can he be turned out at any time you please?—He cultivates the land and takes the crop. He cannot be turned out till he has taken the crop. If we want to turn him out we have to apply to the court and there is a specific time for such application.

F-562. Could you dismiss a man from your tea garden and he still have a legal right to cultivate his crop?—(Mr. Stuart) He cannot be evicted until he has removed his standing crops.

F-563. Has he no other legal right on the land?—No.

F-564. He may cultivate the land for 5 or 10 years and still be liable to eviction?—Yes. But I do not know of a case in which a man has been evicted like that.

F-565. I am not saying that you would or would not; I am asking the legal rights that the man has on the land. Is there any agreement?—There is no agreement. He pays a nominal rent.

F-566. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you know actually what the legal rights are?—I have a very good idea of that.

F-567. *Mr. Cliff*: Could you tell us anything more about his legal rights?—We purchased some rice land, land which was owned by the *Cacharis*. We bought it for the benefit of the coolies. Before we could get possession of the land which we bought from the *Cacharis* we had to serve them with a notice through the court which I think had to be before the 1st of March in order to give them time to get their crops off. Then we took possession of the land.

F-568. I understand that is the legal position outside the garden; I am asking what is the legal position inside the garden?—I think it would apply here also.

F-569. I am advised at the moment that the tea garden worker has no legal right on the land and I am trying to get definite information?—Once he pays 4 annas he has a legal hold on the land to cultivate it for the season.

F-570. The Indian Tea Association deals with the question of wages in its memorandum. I notice the difficulty of giving precise information about rates of wages. Can we get any definite information as to the rate for a man, a woman and a child apart from their earnings?—It varies a great deal.

F-571. I can see that from your memorandum. But the memorandum of the Boloma Tea Estate says: "According to the prevailing system, the old system of whole day work of 8 hours has been changed to contract or unit work." According to that statement they used to work 8 hours. When was that system changed?—I cannot recall a time when they worked 8 hours. I challenge that statement.

F-572. He is speaking of his own experience in another valley. I am trying to find out when the system was changed?—Less hours were introduced, I should think, about 10 years ago.

F-573. *Sir Alexander Murray*: When did you change your practice from the *hazira* to the unit system?—About 10 or 12 years ago.

F-574. Were there many gardens working on the unit system before 1921?—Yes.

F-575. *Mr. Cliff*: Has it been at different stages with different gardens?—Yes, they did not all come into line at the same time.

F-576. Is it not possible that some might have done after 1921?—There might have been some cases like that.

F-577. Are there some gardens which are not on this system now?—I do not know of any myself.

F-578. With regard to this unit system of work, are there different rates for men, women and children for the same unit of work?—No, they do not all do the same work.

F-579. Would you realize the importance of my not gathering wrong impressions and try to make clear the system of payment by units in respect of the three different classes?

F-580. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Could you tell us what particular work are the men, women and children doing this particular month and what they are paid for doing it?

Mr. Cliff: We saw some women pruning and we were told that it was light pruning. We were told that there were some men hoeing and that the children were doing some other work. Would you give us fairly representative units of work and the wages paid in each of these three categories?—We start with children; I do not know what particular work they were doing. They were probably forking bushes. The men are now hoeing. They are paid at the rate of one anna for two *nals*, a *nal* being 144 square feet (12 by 12). They could easily do the equivalent of annas 6 within a period of 4 to 5 hours. They can do as much more if they like. That disposes of the men, barring of course the men working in the factory. The women are pruning; they are set a task much lower than what you saw, because we demand an entirely different class of work. At the present moment they are pruning and their wages are at the rate of one anna for ten bushels. Later on in the season when they do the light work that you saw them doing the other day they will be paid one anna for 15 or 20 bushels. It is all worked out so that a woman can get 5 annas for four or five hours' work. The same is the case with children. Within

the same period they can earn 3 to 4 annas. If they do more they get more. Some men earn 8 aunas a day; others prefer to earn 4 annas and go away to their own cultivation, to harvest or plant their rice crop.

F-581. Can it be taken that in this Valley you have got all the labour you require?—No, we have not.

F-582. Has this valley ever failed to harvest its crop within the last three or four years?—No.

F-583. If the people will only work and in fact do work whenever they like how do you succeed year by year in harvesting your crop?—We have got to hold up our cultivation at times. We get outsiders coming in. That difficulty arises only in the harvesting and planting season.

F-584. I am told that the amount of labour is short and not equal to the demand. I am told that the people work as they will and when they will. The crop is regularly harvested and it appears to me that there is some form of persuasion, some attraction, some compulsion if the crop is harvested in time and not spoilt at the factory. How is it done?—In the first place the crop is not always harvested in time. If we could get a greater number of pluckers we could put the same crop on the market but in a very finer quality. On the other hand in order to harvest the crop in time we sacrifice other works such as cultivation.

F-585. *Mr. Beddoe*: Could you increase your crop if you had more men?—Yes, it comes to that. We have as much crop as the number of men at our disposal can handle.

F-586. If you had double the number of men could you have double the quantity of crop?—(*Mr. Gupta*) Yes, in ten years.

F-587. *Mr. Cliff*: From the statements made it appears to me that somehow or other the work is completed, the crop is sown and it is harvested; I want to find out how it is done if the people just do as they like?—(*Mr. Stuart*) The first point with regard to that is that the women can make such big money during the height of the season. I would like to explain that the harvesting of the crop is over a period of months; in the months of June to October when the heavy flushes are being produced the money is so attractive that women turn out voluntarily except during a period of three weeks when they are engaged in sowing their own rice crops; yet we find the women are not capable of coping with the crop and we have to transfer our men to handle the crop. Therefore we fall behind in cultivation and we suffer a loss in cultivation and at the finish we have not plucked our bushes or produced as full a crop as we might have done if we had an adequate supply of labour.

F-588. It is stated that people utilize their leisure in working for other people and in cultivating for themselves. I assume that the people go where they get the greatest economic inducement?—That is not always so with a coolie. A coolie may know that rates are slightly better in another garden, but because his father, his mother and his grand-father have worked on his garden, he prefers to stick to the garden that he knows.

F-589. I am not thinking of coolies moving from one garden to another; I am thinking of men who may go and sell bamboo or cultivate their own land. On the face of it it appears that the economic inducement is higher in certain other spheres than on his own particular garden; I want to be clear as to that.—I do not see that.

The Chairman: Do you mean, *Mr. Cliff*, that he makes more working on his own paddy land than if he were working on the tea gardens.

F-590. *Mr. Cliff*: The statement is made that leisure is used in cultivating his own ground and in working for other people; I assume he goes where the reward is greatest?—Not so, because whatever inducement you offer at the time he is actually cultivating his own rice land, say from the middle of August to the middle of September, nothing will induce him to come and work.

F-591. It seems that the economic inducement for the women is great enough if they earn what you say they do?—When they are planting the rice you cannot even get the women in.

F-592. The Chinese puzzle that confronts me is that the work is completed somehow or other; if it is completed, I do not understand how the people can do as they like?—(*Mr. Gupta*) If we had sufficient labour we should produce larger crops than we usually produce.

F-593. That is bound up with the question of recruitment as well as the question of the labour available?—(*Mr. Stuart*) A crop—not a full crop—is produced at a sacrifice to other works.

F-594. I will not press that any further. Under item 97 of the memorandum of your Association we get a return of wages; I would like to be sure that I am right in thinking that is calculated as set out in the Government return on the months of March and September?—Yes, it is.

F-595. I would like to see an extract of earnings during those two months or the two months of highest and lowest earnings of a limited number of gardens?—I think these figures of the Government returns are taken from a low month and a good month.

F-596. This is an average; I should like to take certain gardens and get an actual abstract of earnings.—We could do that for you.

F-597. Under item 99 it says that advances free of interest to a very considerable amount are given; that is put down as one of the advantages. I would like to get a record of the loans that are made in a certain number of gardens.—In this particular Valley we have 177 plantations and in the other Valley we have 157 plantations.

The Chairman: Mr. Cliff, did you see the loan book which some of us saw on Saturday?

Mr. Cliff: I did see a loan book. A loan of Rs. 20 may be given and repaid at annas 4 per month. It may be that some people are continually in debt to the planter; I would like to take say 10 per cent. of these gardens and have a record of their loan books over a period of years. I think 5 years is a short enough period for this purpose. Can we have that information, Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: That seems rather a large piece of work, and I do not quite see what the object of it is.

Mr. Cliff: I want to see whether the people are free.

The Chairman: I understood from the books we saw on Saturday (4th January) that these were small loans given in the course of the year and usually paid off within the year.—That is so.

F-598. Repaid by a deduction of annas 4 from the earnings when a full week had been worked?—That is so.

F-599. Is there any larger amount than that?—No.

F-600. Are there any loans running into hundreds of rupees?—No.

Mr. Cliff: I am thinking of consecutive loans, second and third loans, and so on. Under item 99 of the memorandum of the Indian Tea Association the statement is made: "Actual wages are never paid in kind; but there are amplifications in kind such as free housing, water, firewood, sick pay, medical attendance and medicines, advances free of interest to a very considerable amount...." I would like to have information with regard to those advances to a very considerable amount. It may be that these people are always in financial bondage or a considerable number of them are. This is put as an advantage but it may be a considerable disadvantage.

The Chairman: I see your point, Mr. Cliff.

Mr. Beddow: The alternative is for them to go to the *bania* if a loan is refused by the garden.

Mr. Cliff: I am not for the moment concerned with the alternative; I am concerned with the conditions under which they work.

The Chairman: Mr. Cliff, do you really think that these loans, running to Rs. 5, 10 or 20, could possibly form a kind of bond? There is no legal bond in it at all, it is merely an agreement.

Mr. Cliff: I am not yet satisfied that the whole of the population know that the agreement days are gone.

The Chairman: Perhaps not.

Mr. Cliff: It may be that the large majority would sooner stay and pay the loan than run away. I would like to take 10 per cent. of these books over a period of 5 years and see if these loans are going on with the same individuals continuously.

The Chairman: It does not seem to me to be possible. When the books are made up at the end of the year it did not strike me that a large proportion of the workers were in debt to the management.—Taking my own estate, at the end of this year out of over 1,200 coolies, we had not Rs. 500 advanced outstanding.

(*Mr. Rayner*) On my estate out of 4,000 or 5,000 coolies I suppose we have something like Rs. 3,000 or Rs. 3,500 owing from coolies for advances taken; that is all we have at the end of the year. If they take Rs. 10, it is paid back by Re. 1 monthly. (*Mr. Stuart*) We would have no difficulty in collecting these figures for you over a period of two years and we might even do it for three years; but the books five years old have probably been destroyed and it would be difficult to give the figures.

Mr. Cliff: The reason why I press this is that the Association make a point of it; they say "to a very considerable amount."

F-601. *The Chairman*: I read that as meaning to a considerable amount in the total, not to each individual. I understand the figures Mr. Cliff wants can be supplied. I take it that the coolie borrows from you what he would otherwise be borrowing from the *bania*?—Certainly.

F-602. He is getting the loan free of interest from you, whereas he might be paying 75 per cent. interest to the *bania*?—That is so. (*Mr. Gupta*) And if the whole amount is not recovered within three years the amount outstanding is written off. (*Mr. Stuart*) Do you want recurring names or the total amount?

Mr. Cliff: I would like both.

Mr. Beddow: You want complete copies of the advance account?

Mr. Cliff: Yes, I do.

The Chairman: Perhaps I had better discuss this afterwards with Mr. Cliff as to what is the most practical form.

F-603. *Mr. Cliff*: Yes Sir. Under item 97 of the memorandum of the Indian Tea Association it is said: "In their Resolution of Immigrant Labour for the year 1927-28, the Government of Assam wrote—'What is now needed is a gradual and steady improvement of the standard of living and the amenities of life to accompany the gradual and steady increase in wages.'" In commenting on that Resolution you say: "Indian labour of the class from which the tea industry draws its supplies is, however, more concerned with the improvement of status than in the improvement of the standard of living." Can you tell us what the planters are doing in this Valley to improve the standard of life and the amenities of life?—Increase of wages; better housing accommodation, better water supply, anti-malarial measures and generally better medical attention all round.

F-604. Your comment on the Resolution is that the labour is "more concerned with the improvement of status than in the improvement of the standard of living." Does that mean that the Indian tea worker prefers freedom?—He has freedom now.

F-605. Does it mean that the Indian tea worker prefers freedom to go away and be a landholder; is that what "status" means?—In that case, yes.

F-606. *The Chairman*: That means the prospect of becoming a landholder?—Yes.

F-607. In a reasonable time; I take it that is the meaning of "status" there?—That is what it means, yes.

F-608. *Mr. Cliff*: Then does it mean that becoming a landholder does not mean an improvement in standard of life?—Yes, it does.

Mr. Cliff: I have difficulty in realizing quite what that means, because it seems to me that if a man is out to become his own employer, he is not only getting improvement in status but an improvement in his standard of life?

Mr. Beddow: But if he moves out of garden land he will be without all the amenities that are provided for him; if he goes to the *basti* it is a great loss to him.—(*Mr. Gupta*) Many come back to the gardens in order to have the benefits they get from the gardens.

F-609. *Mr. Cliff*: In the introduction to the memorandum of the Government of Assam it is said: "What is needed is the education of the labour force to the appreciation of a higher standard of living, when they will want more and be prepared to work for it and make good use of their earnings." Can you tell me what beginnings are being made to realize that?—(*Mr. Stuart*) It must be admitted that there has not been a great deal done; of course, as previously mentioned, some gardens have got schools; but generally speaking there is not a great deal done in the way of education.

F-610. The Government of Assam in their memorandum say: "but more might and should be done in the direction of providing some attraction which might successfully compete with the nearest grog or opium shop." What I am concerned with here is what is being done and whether it is within the competency of the managers to secure this improvement which everybody desires?—Of course, there is a certain amount of attraction being held out in the way of football for them.

F-611. Would there be any opposition on the part of your Association to giving a public right of way to the lines?—I do not think there would be any opposition. As far as I know, in this Valley they are all public rights of way.

F-612. Does that mean that there is unlimited admittance for anyone to go to the lines?—Oh yes.

F-613. Because I am advised that even missionaries have had to ask for permission?—I have not known our Padre ever to ask for it.

F-614. May I take it as far as you are concerned there is no opposition and there is a public right of way to the lines?—I should say in all estates there is a right of way. (Mr. Gupta) There is no restriction.

F-615. Would your Association oppose the establishment of a public welfare board for tea garden workers?—(Mr. Stuart) I should say we would oppose it.

F-616. Will you tell me why?—Because we consider that we can run our welfare work better without the interference of legislation.

F-617. Then is it the considered view of your Association that as far as this large population is concerned you can do all that is necessary for their welfare?—Yes. (Mr. Gupta) I think we could do better.

F-618. Are you hopeful of achieving any great change during the next decade amongst your population?—(Mr. Stuart) I should say probably within the next few years you will see great changes generally in the welfare, recreation and condition of the coolie.

F-619. Of the tea managers' own volition?—The companies and managers combined.

F-620. It is said in the memorandum of the Government of Assam and in other memoranda that what is absolutely necessary is to increase the needs of the tea garden worker. If the needs of the tea garden worker are going to be increased, labour is going to cost more. Would that conflict with the interests of the tea garden manager?

The Chairman: Or more hours per day might be put in. I take it there is scope for earning 50 per cent. more than is actually earned if there were a desire to earn it?—That is so.

Mr. Cliff: I think there is here room for confusion with regard to this matter, because I am told the people occupy their leisure in doing work on their own land.

The Chairman: Quite.

Mr. Cliff: The point I am on at the moment is that if they give up cultivating their own land and work for the tea planter instead they will loose the value of that labour.

Mr. Clow: Are we clear that all the leisure is spent on their own land and the landless man does as much work as he can on the garden?

Mr. Cliff: I agree there is still a good deal of confusion. I see a conflict of interests in that if the needs of the worker are to be increased that appears to me to increase the cost to the planter of his labour?—I do not think we should pay more for labour; if they found that they had to have these extras they would probably work an hour or two longer; they would certainly never give up their holdings.

F-621. Then, assuming that to be the position, does it not bring one back to the point that one of the ways of getting your labour working more is to increase their needs, and what are you doing to increase their needs?—We are quite prepared to let them earn more money, but they do not wish to take advantage of the opportunity to earn more money.

F-622. But somebody has got to improve the outlook of these people; I am trying to find out what you as planters are doing to improve their outlook and increase their appetite?—I am afraid we are not doing very much except trying to encourage them to play football; that is about all we have done for them.

F-623. Do the present restrictions on recruiting impede or increase the flow of labour?—(Mr. Rayner) It impedes the flow of labour.

F-624. To what extent does it impede it?—It is very difficult to say; there are restrictions on all sides. As we told you before, the people from the country cannot come to the estates without going through certain formalities. Restrictions in every way retard these people from coming to our gardens. If anyone wants to come and has not sufficient money, a *sardar* has to be sent to bring him. That is one restriction and it is a very big restriction. In fact it prevents the free movement of labour in India, and we consider that that is not right.

F-625. The Commission are faced on one hand with the demand of public opinion and of provincial Governments for control of recruiting?—Yes, I know that.

F-626. I understand you are opposed to control of recruiting?—We are opposed to control except a mild form of control by ourselves to prevent abuses.

F-627. We put this question to one of the provincial Governments and they answered that if the restrictions were removed for a year or two there would be a large flow; that would probably result in greater abuses in connection with recruitment and give Assam a bad name again. What do you say to that?—That was brought up by the Governor of Bihar and Orissa when we went to see him. If we have free recruiting controlled by ourselves, that would not happen; we would prevent it happening.

F-628. They say that to-day they have a very considerable number of complaints to Magistrates from the Dooars, and because they have those complaints they make a demand for control. How are you to remove the impression from the mind of the public of this country that restriction of recruiting is unnecessary?—In the case of the Dooars I believe only about 50 per cent. of the recruiting is done through the Tea Districts Labour Association; I do not think you would find many of those abuses from the emigrants that come through the Tea Districts Labour Association; the abuses are in respect of recruitment without any control whatsoever.

F-629. *The Chairman*: Really, are you not wishing for something that would be too unusual to be granted, that one Association, a monopoly, should be granted certain powers of control and nobody else allowed to recruit?—We should not ask for that, if they all had the same amount of control we should not mind at all.

F-630. Then the control would not be your own?—Certainly not.

F-631. It would be Government control of which you approved, but it would apply to everybody?—It might mean that we should have more an official status somewhat as they do in Ceylon.

F-632. *Mr. Cliff*: We are concerned to know, if the conditions are as attractive as the evidence indicates, why you cannot get a sufficient supply of labour?—As we said before, there is restriction, in the first place, and then there is the scarcity of recruits owing to the economic conditions in the recruiting districts. If there is a famine you will usually find it is a good recruiting year. On the other hand, if the crops are good and more labour is being employed in the recruiting districts, then we do not get so many recruits from that district; that is the reason of it.

Mr. Cliff: I see that running right through your evidence, but on the other hand Ceylon and Burma get the labour they require.

F-633. *Mr. Beddoe*: The tea garden *sardar* is restricted to his small district and he very soon drains that circumscribed area dry?—That is so; he goes to that one district, finds that the economic conditions there are good and he cannot bring people to the tea gardens. It is not due at all to the system of recruiting.

F-634. *The Chairman*: Then I take it you would be rather glad to see the *sardar* system replaced by a better system of authorized and controlled responsible recruiters who would be above many of the temptations that are open to the ordinary humble *sardar*?—It would not then be *arkotti* recruiting but from our experience it would lead to that; that is why we favour control of recruiting by the industry; we fear it would go back to the old professional recruiters who are difficult to control. We think it is unfair that the tea industry should be singled out for these restrictions.

F-635. Of course that is a matter we shall have most carefully to consider, but I gather from your own memorandum that while both you and the Government would like to see the ideal of an absolutely free flow of labour, you both admit that at the present moment that cannot be attained?—We only say that because the Governments of Bihar and Orissa, Madras and the Central Provinces all want some kind of control from the Magistrates in their Provinces.

F-636. That is so, and as practical people you recognize that?—(*Mr. Stuart*) We have very bitter experience in the past of *arkatti* and the more experienced of us are not quite confident that *arkatti* would not find its way in still, so that for a period of years we would like to see recruiting controlled in some form; after a period of years, if we can prove we can do it as it is being done now, under our own control, then let us have entirely free recruiting.

F-637. *Mr. Cliff*: Are you in favour of a minimum wage for the tea industry?—(*Mr. Rayner*) No, we are not in favour of that.

F-638. Why not?—We do not see how it is possible; it is unworkable.

F-639. Is it more impossible here than in Ceylon?—I do not know Ceylon but I have been here 36 years and I know what we can do here. (*Mr. Stuart*) In Ceylon they have a large number of coolies emigrating; there is a flow going and coming; a very large percentage return. The result is that a man goes there to work; in our case the men come to colonize. They do not go to Ceylon in families to the same extent as they do here.

F-640. *Mr. Clow*: You were here when the statutory minimum wage was in force?—(*Mr. Rayner*) Yes; that was only under the Act; it was Rs. 5 and Rs. 4.

F-641. Did it prove unworkable then?—It was only with reference to those that came under Act I; it did not apply to the old resident people. If it only applied to people newly recruited, I should say there would be no objection, but there certainly should not be a minimum wage for the Province.

F-642. *Mr. Beddow*: Is it a fact that though there is a minimum wage in Ceylon, at the same time a great many men are not paid that minimum wage, and legally not so?—That is because there is a minimum wage and a minimum amount of work to be done.

F-643. *Mr. Cliff*: What opposition could there be on your part to regulation of wages?—The differing conditions; for instance, where the labourers have land the conditions are quite different from the conditions on the higher land and other places where there is no *khet* land.

F-644. Of course that is all a matter of assessment. Would you be prepared to consider the establishment of wage-fixing machinery?—I cannot say we would favour it. (*Mr. Stuart*) What should we do with a coolie who was incapacitated from earning the minimum wage?

F-645. *Mr. Ahmed*: You have certain labour rules amongst yourselves which you say do not affect the free movement of labour?—I have gone through these rules and found that they affect the free movement. Will you please tender them to keep in our records?—(*Mr. Stuart*) I should like to explain that these rules were framed at the period when Act XIII was in force. They have been under consideration for a period of three or four years with regard to revision, but as three years ago it was possible that we might have a new Act, they were held in abeyance; they have since been held in abeyance pending the Report of this Royal Commission. That is why you find references to Act XIII, but there is nothing in these rules that we can see that in any way interferes with the liberty of the coolie.

F-646. I ask for the production of those rules?—Yes.

F-647. I take it you are in favour of the abolition of Act VI of 1901?—(*Mr. Rayner*) Yes.

F-648. Can you tell us how many coolies were recruited last year?—I think it was 73,000 for the whole of Assam.

F-649. I suppose you will have no objection to the free movement of your coolies?—No.

F-650. With regard to your civil contract system, I suppose you renew the contract every year?—(*Mr. Stuart*) There is no contract at all; it is only an arrangement between the management and the coolies.

F-651. I suppose there are certain penalties for the breach of the contract?—As there is no contract the question of penalty does not arise.

F-652. I have been making inquiries since these four days and I gather that penalties are imposed for any breach of the contract?—There is no contract and as such there is no breach of contract.

F-653. I suppose the fact that you advance money to many of your coolies shows that they are indebted?—No; on the other hand a lot of coolies send money home.

F-654. With regard to the system of recruitment of coolies, do you have any objection if recruitment is done by a public agency or bureau?—(*Mr. Rayner*) If you could show us a constructive system by which we could get our labour cheaper we are quite willing to consider it. The scheme that has been put forward by the Chairman of the Assam Labour Board is, in our opinion, unworkable.

F-655. With regard to repatriation, I take it that it is not a fact that coolies are repatriated at your cost?—Some are and some are not. (*Mr. Stuart*) If they come on short-term contract they are repatriated at our cost.

F-656. Whenever there is a strike in the garden, I suppose you take the aid of the police force?—(*Mr. Rayner*) Yes, if it is a serious riot; otherwise not.

F-657. With regard to education, I think Mr. Gupta said that children do not come to schools because they go to jungles to cut bamboo and make money?—(*Mr. Gupta*) I said they do not like to come.

F-658. Is it not a fact that because the parents of these children do not get a living wage they are forced to send their children to the jungles instead of sending them to schools?—The money that these children get from the sale of the forest produce does not go to help their parents; they utilize this money for buying sweetmeats.

F-659. I suppose you are willing to consider the question of paying these coolies a living wage?—We are paying them a living wage.

F-660. I take it that these labourers do not get any holidays with pay?—(*Mr. Stuart*) During *poojas* some gardens grant holidays with pay, but I have never heard of a weekly holiday being paid.

F-661. How many days' holidays do they get in a year?—(*Mr. Rayner*) They take a holiday when they want it.

F-662. If one puts in a number of years' service on the garden, does he get any gratuity or pension?—(*Mr. Stuart*) There are many instances in which people have been given a pension. (*Mr. Gupta*) I have some men who are getting pension.

F-663. I suppose the practice of giving pension is not in vogue in many gardens?—(*Mr. Rayner*) Deserving cases always do get pension.

F-664. *Sir Alexander Murray*: It has been put to us why cannot the tea gardens recruit as easily as the oil fields in Assam. For instance, recruitment for the oil fields at Digboi is not made from outside the oil fields. Will you shortly explain why the oil fields should be able to get people on the spot while you have such difficulty in getting people?—(*Mr. Stuart*) In the case of the tea estates we like to go in for families, while in the case of oil fields and mines they go in for single men for shorter periods.

F-665. They are very much better paid in the oil fields, are they not?—Yes, if you take the actual cash earnings. They have got to be paid more because they have to support themselves and also have to remit money for the maintenance of their family in their country.

F-666. In other words, you mean to say that the single man working in the oil fields has got to be paid more in cash because he has to maintain two establishments while on the tea gardens the case is different because the man lives with his wife and children?—Yes.

F-667. We have had it put to us, why should you take advantage of the man, his wife and children and decide that they all should work instead of making only the man work?—Because they are agriculturists; they have always done it.

F-668. *The Chairman*: Do I take it that you are looking forward to the time when you will have your own labour force born and bred in Assam?—Yes, that is our hope.

Sir Alexander Murray: Have you got any figures to show the number of people who have in recent years been recruited into this province, or into the Surma Valley, and the numbers that are to-day?—Taking the years 1914-1925 there were over 500,000 souls recruited into Assam.

F-670. Where did you get the figure from?—From the reports of the Assam Labour Board.

F-671. Altogether how many are there on the estates now?—About a million.

F-672. So that of the 500,000 people who were brought up here since 1914, 400,000 have drifted away into other employment?—A great number of them have colonized in these parts.

F-673. Have you any idea of their number?—Roughly, I think, it is 600,000.

F-674. Where can we get the exact figure from?—From the Assam Board. If you want we can give you the number of acres that are under these settlers.

F-675. No, that I have already got. I want to know the number of people, outside the tea gardens, who have colonized since 1914?—I think that information was collected for the Simon Commission.

F-676. Can you get us the figures?—Yes.

F-677. You are going to give us a statement showing the budget expenditure of different families. Has it been drawn on the lines of 1921-22 figures so that we can draw a comparison between the position in 1921 and the position to-day?—Yes.

F-678. Have you attempted to convert into money value all the additional things that you give your labourers?—We have the statement here and we can let you have a copy of it.

F-679. What is all included in that?—Do they show a value placed on housing, on medical attendance and such other things?—We have left that all out.

F-680. Why?—Because in this statement we were simply taking the actual earnings of the coolies plus his supplementary earnings. We have not taken into account any bonus.

F-681. Why?—Because we were trying to show what the coolie actually earned in cash and what he earned himself.

F-682. What special forms of bonus do you give to the labourer?—Many gardens give a bonus of one rupee for a complete month's work in addition to the annual Rs. 12 bonus.

F-683. You have not included that in your figures?—No, not in these figures.

F-684. What is the use of giving figures which do not give the total amount that the labourer earns?—The bonus comes under the total wage earnings, but our statement shows the actual cash earnings.

F-685. You give blankets to your coolies every year?—Yes.

F-686. And that has a value?—Yes, about Rs. 3.

F-687. Have you included that?—No.

F-688. You supply your coolies with rice at a cheap rate?—Yes

F-689. Is that included in the statement?—No.

F-690. Have you put in anything for fuel and grazing?—No. We have prepared our statement on the basis of Government returns. Our returns to the Government give the actual cash paid to the coolies; the Government does not accept rice concessions or free supply of blankets, etc. In addition to the actual cash paid, we wish to show what they earn from their rice fields and from the sale of goats, cows and buffaloes.

F-691. All people do not earn from rice fields or from the sale of goats, whereas all of them get blankets and other concessions?—If you want that information we can submit it to you later on.

F-692. *The Chairman*: The point I take it is that as a general rule they only work as you say, from 4 to 5 hours on the tea garden and the rest of the day they spend on their land, and you are attempting to give an estimate of the value of the work they do on their land so as to enable us to understand their total income from the two sources, that is, from the tea garden and from the land. That is your purpose?—Yes, leaving out all concessions. Here are the complete figures of one garden. In this garden the allowances, taking rice land, sugarcane, homestead, housing accommodation, firewood, livestock and medical attendance, came to Rs. 40,000 per annum.

F-693. Amongst a labour force of?—Of a permanent labour force of 1,147. If you add to that the bonus, sickness benefits and maternity benefits, the total comes to Rs. 71,224.

F-694. *Mr. Beddoe*: I think there is some misunderstanding about the period that is taken up for cultivating paddy. Will you tell us what time is taken for this purpose?—On the average, the man takes a month to cultivate it and another month or six weeks for harvesting it.

F-695. *Mr. Cliff*: He does not work during those two months on the garden?—No.

F-696. *The Chairman*: At the beginning I asked you a question as to how often your Surma Valley Branch met, and we have heard from the replies to great many questions that some gardens do this and some gardens do that. There is evidently a great diversity of policy amongst individual gardens. I take it that the ten planters are by nature strong individualists, but still may I take it also that you are willing to pool your experience and knowledge for the benefit of your whole industry, or, at any rate, for the benefit of the whole of your valley?—Certainly.

F-697. And there would seem to be a possibility for adding to the usefulness of your branch if you were from time to time at your meetings to discuss what individuals are doing in various directions so that your industry as a whole might benefit from the experience of every one of you?—Yes.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Mr. G. D. WALKER, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner, Cachar.

F-698. *The Chairman*: You are the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar district, and you have some years' experience, I understand, in this neighbourhood?—Yes. I have served four years in this district altogether, and have in all ten years' experience in planting districts as an *ex-officio* inspector of tea gardens, both as Subdivisional Officer and as Deputy Commissioner.

F-699. Will you tell us from your experience whether or not conditions have substantially improved since the enquiry of 1921-22 and in what respect, and also point out any particulars in which you think further improvement is still needed?—I was here in 1921-22 and then I was away for a number of years, not in a tea district. I noticed on returning that, first of all, the wages now given were on a higher scale than they were in those days; instead of 3 annas you find 4 annas is being given and 5 annas in the place of 4 annas; there is an actual increase in the nominal money wage given. Another thing I have noticed is that every garden now gives maternity benefits while in the old days only two or three gardens were giving them. I also notice that whereas the coolies used to work longer hours in the cold weather they are working much shorter hours now-a-days. These are the principal changes I have noticed.

F-700. Do you think that their condition is substantially better than it was eight years ago?—It is an exceedingly difficult question to answer.

F-701. Because the cost of living was at its height in 1921 and it has presumably fallen since then?—Yes. I think, on the whole, the coolies are looking much better fed now than they were in those days. That was an exceptional time after the War. They are looking fitter in body and better clothed, on the whole.

F-702. Have you any observations to make to the Commission with regard to the methods of recruitment? You no doubt will have noticed in the years that you have been in this neighbourhood, whether or not the old abuses connected with recruiting are on the decrease as years go on?—Very seldom there is any complaint of illegal recruitment these days. I am not acquainted with the modes of recruiting, never having had anything to do with recruiting districts. I can only judge from what I see of people who have been newly recruited when I meet them on the tea gardens, and in one or two instances it has been pointed out to me that people who are obviously unfit for any sort of duty have been recruited as workers. I am interested to know if all such workers are supposed to undergo medical examination before they come up. I can only assume that they have been recruited as dependents. No doubt

the company at Calcutta has got the usual commission for recruiting them as workers. I should think that every one accompanying a worker should also be medically examined. I do not know if one could insist upon that. Anyhow more adequate medical examination is necessary from the specimens I have seen.

F-703. You think that would be for the good of the tea gardens as well as of the individuals?—Yes.

F-704. You know, of course, that there is a stringent medical examination for an emigrant going from Madras to Ceylon. You think that the present examination is inadequate?—In some cases it must be so from what I have seen.

F-705. Is there any other point that you would like to put before the Commission?—Not about recruiting. I can only judge from what I hear from the planters, and they have already expressed their opinions; I have no independent opinions upon that subject.

F-706. You are not aware of any number of coolies, apart from such cases as you have mentioned, wishing to get back to their country but unable to do so?—No. If a coolie wishes to return to his country he applies to do so, first of all, to the manager. I have heard cases in which a coolie has run away from a garden.

F-707. For what reason?—I do not know. I have known coolies running away, but they never apply to me to be repatriated. The only time that such a coolie will come to me—and the cases are few—will be to say that he has left his wife on the garden and he would like to get her released by the manager. Sometimes he runs away leaving his cattle on the garden and approaches the Deputy Commissioner for getting his cattle back. The Deputy Commissioner after investigation settles the matter with the manager one way or the other.

F-708. What is the extent of cases of that kind?—Not more than four a year. In 1928 there were four complaints and in 1929 there were four. They were almost all of them of that nature.

F-709. A small proportion compared with the total force?—Very small indeed.

F-710.—If the coolies or any considerable number of them were actually discontented with their life and anxious to go back to where they came from, you would be sure to hear of them?—Yes.

F-711. Are you quite confident that they are free to go?—Yes.

F-712. There is no restraint?—No, there is none. I may say it has been suggested that because a coolie has taken an advance of Rs. 10 or Rs. 15 he is bound to that garden. That is not so. If a coolie wants to go and he owes Rs. 10 or Rs. 15 all he has got to do is to sell his goat and pay his debt. Nothing whatever can keep him from going.

F-713. *Mr. Clow:* If a man is perfectly free why should it be necessary for him to leave his wife behind him?—Because he is probably owing some money to the garden.

F-714. Does the manager hold his wife as surety?—No. He makes it a grievance; but what generally happens is that he has quarrelled with somebody and wants to go.

F-715. Actually there is no impression among the labour force that they are still bound to remain for a term of years?—No.

F-716. They are fully alive to the changes which the repeal of the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act, XIII of 1859, has made?—Yes.

F-717. In actual practice the gardens although they may be in the same valley vary very largely in the attractions they offer to the labourers. Why is that so?—Healthier and more comfortable gardens require to offer less than gardens which are not so healthy or comfortable. A good manager keeps his labour more easily than a hard man.

F-718. In actual practice do you think that the less desirable gardens pay higher wages?—We visited a garden the other day; we were told that the wages were 5 annas and 4 annas there. Mr. Stuart was talking of his gardens to-day and said that the wages were 6 annas and 5 annas. In Mr. Stuart's garden there is only a small area available for rice cultivation. It is not a healthy place and the money wages are therefore higher.

F-719. Do you consider it practicable to enforce a system of statutory minimum wage in return for fixed hours of work?—It is no good doing so, because no two gardens have the same conditions not only from the point of view of health but the kind of work to be done, the kind of coolies they have and many other things.

F-720. But you had a statutory minimum wage some time back. How did the varying conditions in the several gardens affect that?—That applied only for three years to coolies recruited under Act I of 1882 and Act VI of 1901. Only those coolies received, as it were, special statutory treatment. All the rest were not affected by that.

F-721. *The Chairman*: And the figure was placed low enough. I presume, lower than what the actual earnings were?—I presume so. When you have coolies newly recruited to Assam and not acclimatized to the place a statutory minimum wage is all right, because they could not do the necessary work for some time. The Statute also had to lay down the kind of housing, water supply, the number of blankets and certain minimum medical facilities which the labourers should get.

F-722. *Mr. Cliff*: Does the same condition apply now; is the coolie given the same protection for the first three years till he gets acclimatized?—I did not say that it lasted for the whole of three years. The contract lasted for three years. I should think that a tea planter will better be able to say how long it takes a coolie to get acclimatized. But if a man wants to keep his labour it is not under any agreement now; he voluntarily does the very best he can for their health and comfort and makes them settle down.

F-723. *Mr. Beddoe*: Does not a new coolie get a minimum wage now?—It is not a statutory minimum wage. The garden pays him voluntarily. A woman gets a minimum wage of 4 annas a day in the plucking season whether the leaf is plentiful or not. That is the minimum wage for 4 to 5 hours work.

F-724. *Mr. Clow*: In the old days was the minimum wage lower or higher than the actual earnings of a coolie to whom the statutory minimum wage did not apply?—The minimum wage was the lowest. Nobody else in the garden got quite so low as the one who got the minimum wage.

F-725. *The Chairman*: I understand that at present for a new recruit they pay a certain fixed wage whether or not he is able to perform the ordinary task for the first 12 months?—Yes, he has to be paid in order to afford the necessities of life. Probably in the first year those necessities of life are more expensive than they would be later on.

F-726. *Mr. Clow*: Was it a custom to tie down the coolies on contracts under Act XIII of 1859?—That disappeared only two or three years ago. They entered into a contract for 313 days and received a bonus of Rs. 8, 10 or 12. They put their thumb impressions on a document. They could be prosecuted under that Act.

F-727. In contracts under that Act there was presumably a wage fixed by contract?—None at all.

F-728. You have experience of both the valleys?—Yes.

F-729. Could you give us briefly how the conditions here differ on the main points from those of the Assam Valley?—With regard to Act XIII, in Sibsagar and Darrang one got hundreds of petitions from tea concerns to enforce agreements under that Act. But the number is extremely small here. I have a book here of labour difficulties in tea gardens from many years back; most of the petitions in this concern those agreements. It is astonishing to find that the number here is very small.

F-730. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What year were you over there?—I was in Golaghat from 1910 to 1914, in Mandalgai in 1915 and part of 1916. Towards the end of 1916 I was Deputy Commissioner, Darrang, for six weeks. I was a few weeks in Dibrugarh.

F-731. All that was about 13 years ago?—Yes.

F-732. *Mr. Clow*: With regard to inspections of gardens done by you or your officers, to what are they directed?—I have here some specimen inspection notes on the condition of the gardens we have been seeing. The first thing to look at is the condition of the lines and houses. Then we inspect the water supply, the hospital and the medical arrangements. Then we inspect the factory, because nowadays in addition to inspecting the tea gardens one has to inspect

the factories also. In the office we inspect the births register, the deaths register and the vaccination register. We also take the *hazira* books and check the returns of wages; we generally take out the two last six-monthly returns to Government and if we feel any doubt about them we check them carefully. I may say I have never found an instance in which such check revealed anything wrong. To get an idea of the health of the garden, death-rate alone is not a sufficient guide. I take the hospital books and see the incidence of diseases at various critical points in the year or two years just before. These are the several points to which we generally direct our attention when we inspect the gardens.

F-733. To what extent is inspection done by the Deputy Commissioner and what extent by junior officers?—In this district as well as in Sylhet, Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Darrang the Superintendent of Police and the Civil Surgeon are also inspectors of labourers.

F-734. Not the Subdivisional Officers?—The Subdivisional Officers are inspectors for their subdivisions. And it is my practice and I know it is the practice of most of my Service to do as many inspections themselves as they possibly can. In a heavy district or when there has been an interruption of one's work in the cold weather one may be forced to call upon the Superintendent of Police or the Civil Surgeon to inspect certain gardens. I had myself to call upon the Superintendent of Police to inspect two or three gardens once. At other times I have done it myself.

F-735. We have it suggested that the birth and death statistics of the gardens are inaccurate. Is that your experience?—I do not believe that the returns of the tea gardens are in general inaccurate. In the old days when under Act VI of 1901 a garden might be put on the black list on account of its unhealthy conditions and debarred from recruiting, there was a great temptation for the Doctor Babu to cook his figures and show a lower death-rate, also certain planters without looking into the causes of ill health might dismiss the Doctor Babu if he showed a high death rate. I would not say that was not possible. But my experience has been quite the reverse of it. In Mr. Mullan's memorandum which I have read he quotes the case of a garden in which he found 53 children under one year of age but not a single death among them. When I was in Golaghat I inspected a garden at Khumtai and found on the books that the births for the first 8 months of the year were 91. I referred to the deaths register and found not a single death among those children. I asked them to produce the children; they were all mustered together in the factory; they were all present and everything was correct.

F-736. *The Chairman*: Ninety-one births without a single death?—Yes. I think Mr. Mullan might have checked his figures in the same way as I did. It is highly improbable that such a thing could be correct, but I have verified it from my own experience and found that it could be correct.

F-737. That is a very important statement. What is your opinion about death certification; is it reliable?—I have no reason to suspect it. After all I do not see what is to be gained by concealing deaths nowadays at least, and everything is to be gained by putting down absolutely correct figures, so that if there is anything going wrong in the garden, if there is anything unhealthy happening, they would get all the assistance of their Agents at Calcutta in putting it right. For instance, if a manager wants to put up a better water supply there is nothing better he could do than putting up the correct death-rate. Then the Calcutta Agents would feel that there is something wrong and improve matters at once.

F-738. You think that nowadays self interest also works on the side of accuracy?—Fortunately self interest works in favour of the coolie all the time nowadays.

F-739. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What about the district returns, I mean the returns for places outside the garden; are they reliable?—I know that they are not reliable. They cannot be, because many of the people who record them are illiterate. But on a tea garden you can get more accurate figures, because you know every body who is there. All of them have been recruited and they live on the garden lands. They are dealt with by a Doctor Babu who works directly under a European trained Medical Officer.

F-740. *Col. Russell*: As a matter of fact the provincial figures are higher than the garden figures; still you say they are inaccurate?—With regard to accuracy all I can say is that there is no intentional omission; there is no tendency to do that.

F-741. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What is the position of your Government regarding labour difficulties or complaints of that description? How does Government intervene, where and when?—Government intervenes through the District Magistrate or the Subdivisional Officer as the case may be.

F-742. Suppose there was trouble on a garden, how do you get knowledge of it; what do you do when you get knowledge of it?—Suppose there is an exodus of coolies into a station on account of something going wrong in a garden. One hears about it quickly enough. Then one goes out. Or suppose a manager is having a riot, he will send a wire to the district authorities.

F-743. Who goes out?—The District Magistrate. I had one case to deal with as soon as I returned. It was the very first morning after I arrived here. There was a garden giving trouble. I went out and met the coolies on the road and asked them what their grievances were. I told them to go back to the garden. I discussed the matter with the manager and came to certain conclusions. There were certain members of his staff who were undesirable and he said that he would get rid of them. There has been no trouble ever since. That is one instance. In my experience most of the strikes are local and personal and are very easily disposed of.

F-744. You know there is trade union legislation; are there any trade unions that you have come in contact with at all?—Not, except in books.

F-745. We have trade disputes legislation. Have you studied that so that you may know what should be done in the event of any dispute arising? Or do you act on your own initiative?—I act on my own initiative. At the same time I may say this that every trouble between Indian and European has to be reported immediately to the Government of India. I report it to the Local Government and the Government of India is notified at once.

F-746. There is no dispute arising on a garden of which you get notice without your promptly advising the Local Government and the Government of India?—That is so. Meantime I carry on.

F-747. You will have to act on your own initiative?—I may ask for guidance.

F-748. Supposing it was suggested to you that there should be arbitration in the event of a dispute; is there any machinery for arbitration or for a board of conciliation in this Province?—No. For instance if I found that the arrangements of a manager were very unfavourable to the coolies and that they were badly paid, (rarely do I get such complaints), I would try and get together all the senior and more respected members of his own community from the neighbourhood and have the public opinion of the community on my side, because I know that the planters are not in favour of starving the coolies. I would then insist on the manager raising the wages.

F-749. What would you do to persuade the workers?—Generally I would let them have a talk with me and let them tell me what was wrong. In 99 cases out of a 100 that would settle the matter. I do not know why it should, but it does.

F-750. Can you tell us how many schools there are in your province?—In this district there are three Government lower primary schools and 14 Government aided schools on tea gardens, of which 3 are in Hailakandi. There are 2 A class schools and 11 B class schools in Silchar subdivision. In the Government primary schools on tea gardens there are 118 children. In the B class Government-aided schools there are 379 children. In Local Board lower primary schools in the neighbourhood of tea gardens there are 634 children of tea garden labourers. That is only for the Silchar subdivision. I cannot give the figures for Hailakandi.

F-751. Would the children be prepared to take advantage of the schooling provided for them if it was near by and if there was a teacher available?—My impression is that the children have no inclination to come to school. I have been told of cases in which the children went to school for a day or two and then came up for their wages. The number of schools on tea gardens is gradually increasing. Apart from the schools, there is the *Bahoo* class on the tea gardens who teach the boys of about 12 years of age in the evening. I think you would get the planter to encourage children to come to school more if going to school did not mean that those children were going to be turned into little *bahoo*s.

F-752. Has free compulsory education been discussed in this district?—Yes.

F-753. With what result?—In this province any local body which wishes to do so can vote a certain proportion of the cost, provided that Government contribute the rest.

F-754. Has any Municipality or District Board put that into effect?—Not yet.

F-755. Have you any statistics available of the amount of land that has been taken up by ex-tea-garden-coolies in Cachar or Hailakandi. I want to get at the average amount of land held by these people? I will try to get the information.

F-756. *Miss Power*: You said you thought the number of schools was gradually increasing, but the Government evidence is very much to the contrary. It says that there has been a general decrease all round in the A, B and C types of school?—There has been an enormous increase in the number of Local Board schools in this district. There are more coolie children going to Local Board primary schools than there are going to schools on the tea gardens.

F-757. Is the suggestion that the children who used to go to the tea garden schools are now going to the Local Board schools?—I did not suggest that. The number of lower primary schools in the neighbourhood of tea gardens has increased. The facilities for going to school are many. The number of lower primary schools in the Silchar division is about 230.

F-758. How far would you say that the coolie workers on the tea gardens or in the tea factories are aware of the legislation governing their conditions of service?—There are probably “sea lawyers” in every garden—people who know the law. If a coolie is in doubt about it he has only got to ask a Magistrate.

F-759. What opportunity does he get of meeting with the magistrate?—He has only to walk into Silchar.

F-760. Do you ever get any complaints from the workers themselves?—The Deputy Commissioner of this district in the year 1928 received 4 complaints from coolies, and 4 in the year 1929. They were all matters of adjustment of accounts between the departing coolies and the manager, and they were settled to the satisfaction of both parties.

F-761. Take this Commission. I take it that all the managers of tea gardens were aware of the existence of this Commission and of its coming here and of the questions it was investigating. Would you say there was any general knowledge among the workers on the tea gardens of the existence of this Commission?—Yes. The coolies think that Mr. Gandhi has sent this Commission to raise their pay.

F-762. Why do you say that?—Because I have heard it said.

F-763. Have any of them suggested coming to give evidence?—No. You were asking about what facilities the coolie on a tea garden had of knowing what the law is. On a tea garden, in addition to the European management, there are a considerable number of clerks, more or less educated people, whose interests are very often not the interests of the managers; and whenever there is any grievance in a garden it is those people who instigate whatever disaffection there may be. In the case of a real grievance they have the opportunity of having it made known, because these people can write letters and can suggest to the coolies the line of action. That is one considerable safety valve.

F-764. But these people are in the employment of the firm, and if the firm were contravening an Act, the complaint of a coolie to an employee of the firm would not assist the matter much, would it?—If a clerk on a tea garden finds there is a grievance, he does not come into the light of day at all. He simply instigates the coolie to make a row about it. The coolies get in for all the trouble. It is their heads which can be broken. The clerk does not get his head broken.

F-765. The reason I am asking this is that in the Government return the Chief Inspector for Bengal says there is an extremely high percentage of factories in Assam which are not inspected every year—a much higher percentage than we have met with in the more heavily industrialized areas?—That is because they are tea garden factories. They are not worth worrying about. They are tiny little places. They are open to the light of day. You can see them at any time you like. They are not factories in the real sense of the term.

F-766. *Mr. Clow*: They are as much factories as ginning factories?—They are very small.

F-767. *Miss Power*: They have as much machinery, and therefore as much capacity for causing accident, as ginning factories?—Possibly. Have you any statistics of the number of accidents which have occurred in Assam factories?

Mr. Clow: We have sufficient evidence that the statistics are entirely unreliable.

F-768. *The Chairman*: I understand that there is to be a separate Inspector of Factories for Assam. Do you know whether there is already a separate Inspector of Factories for Assam?—I do not know.

F-769. *Miss Power*: The same presumption underlies the Government evidence in respect of workmen's compensation?—I do not know how anybody could get away with it in a tea garden. I cannot imagine Dr. Ramsay, or any other of these medical officers, being unaware of an accident in a factory.

F-770. Are all the medical officers of the same standing as Dr. Ramsay?—I do not say of his attainments.

F-771. *Mr. Cliff*: You said in reply to Mr. Clow that the inspection took the form of inspecting the lines, sanitation and water?—Inspection of lines and water supply.

F-772. In the report for 1929 neither of those two subjects are mentioned. Are they ever made the subject of observation in the reports?—You can see all the reports of myself and my predecessors. The first thing one does is to report on the lines and the water supply.

F-773. In this printed report, while there are observations on many subjects, there are no observations on these two subjects. Are there any reports of this character which deal with these subjects?—I gave to the Secretary of the Commission reports on the gardens which we have visited.

F-774. I wondered what observations were made by the Inspectors in regard to the lines?—You can see them.

F-775. *The Chairman*: Are they included in the Public Health Report?—The reports are in detail on each garden. Nothing is excerpted from them. They are mostly routine things.

F-776. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You have sent us copies of the Deputy Commissioner's latest inspection report on these gardens?—Yes.

F-777. *Mr. Cliff*: Do they contain a general summary of the observations with regard to the inspection of the lines of the whole of the gardens inspected?—Of the particular garden he was inspecting at the moment, yes.

F-778. That is not my point. I am reminded that these are reports on individual gardens; but here we have a report covering the whole of the Valley. There is no mention of housing or of water?—You had better see Government about that. I am not responsible for making up the report about the Valley.

F-779. Is there extant a report covering the whole of the gardens on these two subjects. I understand I can get the information in other reports. Have you the report on "Emigrant Labour in the Province of Assam, 1929." Will you look on page 4 of each section—"Complaints from tea garden labourers to tea garden managers." Why is there such a remarkable difference between the number of complaints in the two valleys? In the one valley the number of complaints received during the year was 86 and in the other valley 4?—I pointed out that in the other valley they rely much more on complaints by coolies for breach of contract, and that in this valley they do not do so. That is the bulk of complaints which one receives by coolies.

F-780. You say that the number here that has been dealt with refers to complaints by coolies against managers?—It is due also to the fact that they were under contract. The complaint against the manager very often was "I want a discharge certificate."

F-781. May we take it that "the number dealt with executively and decided for complainant on application for discharge certificate" accounts for the large number?—Yes

F-782. Were any steps taken to make the garden population aware of the fact that they were not now under the agreement which they were under previously?—They know that; they do not come and ask me for discharge certificates.

F-783. Were any steps taken by the Commissioner or Sub-Commissioners to make them aware of that?—It did not appear to be necessary to do so, because as soon as the giving of agreements was stopped, they did not come and ask for discharge certificates.

F-784. May I take it that no steps were taken by the officers?—I cannot say whether they were or were not.

F-785. Are any steps taken to make the illiterate population aware of their rights under the different Acts passed—the Workmen's Compensation Act or other such Acts?—No more steps than have been taken to inform the common villager of the existence of the Indian Penal Code.

F-786. You were speaking about minimum wages. Taking evidence the other day on a garden, a young fellow of about 25 said that his rate of wages was Re. 1.8 per week and that he had been employed for 2½ years. Are there many cases like that within your knowledge?—I do not know. He did not complain of it, did he?

F-787. He made the statement in evidence?—That was his wage. He looked fit enough.

F-788. Are there many cases like that?—I do not expect so.

F-789. You do not know?—I do not know.

Mr. Beddow: I think he said that that is what he earned. He did not say what more he could earn. We have looked up the books and we find he was only working four days a week.

Mr. Cliff: He said he had been there for 2½ years. I think he was asked what his wages were, and his reply was Re. 1.8 per week.

Mr. Beddow: That is what he chose to earn.

Mr. Cliff: My point is about the question and his answer. I am trying to find out whether there are many more cases of that kind.

F-790. The Government of Assam have put in a memorandum in which I see it was suggested that there should be a conference of medical officers to discuss the matter of the provision of latrines and conservancy arrangements. Has that conference taken place?—You had better ask the Government.

F-791. The Government appears to have no information, and therefore I am asking about it in the Valley?—I do not know. I have not heard about it at all.

F-792. The Government of Assam refer to a recommendation of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee to the effect that it would be better to spend money on education, superannuation benefits, and welfare work rather than on giving increases of wages. Has anything been done to give effect to that recommendation? Government has recommended the tea planters to do that? The tea planters have increased wages, and since I came here there has been a very large increase in the number of schools both, on tea gardens and near tea gardens, and there has been a great increase in maternity benefit. That is directly bearing on child welfare.

F-793. The recommendation is that it would be better to spend money on education, superannuation benefit and welfare work?—It would be better to spend it on that than in giving higher wages? Undoubtedly, if it is a choice of giving the labourers more money to spend in the grog shop and spending it in these beneficial ways for their benefit.

F-794. You agree with the recommendation. Has anything been done to give effect to the recommendation?—I have just said that I have seen a steady improvement all the time since I have been in this country.

F-795. I am speaking of since the report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, 1921-22?—I began by saying that I have noticed a big difference since I was in the district last—in 1922, coming back in 1929—in those directions.

F-796. In education, superannuation and welfare?—I do not know about superannuation.

F-797. There was a point raised before this Commission that rice was issued on credit and that there was a tendency for the labourer to take more than he actually required. A committee advocated that when rice was issued it should only be issued for cash payments. Has effect been given to that?—I do not know of any garden on which rice was issued on credit. During the flood recently Government issued nearly a lakh of rupees worth of rice on credit in this district to the villagers.

F-798. You are not aware of the system which was tendered in evidence to the Assam Labour Enquiry?—No, but I should think that if coolies needed it as much as the villagers needed it this last year they would do as Government did in this case and issue it on credit to them. Why not?

F-799. I am not dealing with your opinion; I am dealing with the opinion of the Committee. The Committee advocated that when rice was issued it should be issued only on cash payment. The Government concurred in that recommendation?—That is to say that instead of giving the coolie rice you should give him money.

The Chairman: The point was that the Committee appeared to fear that the issue of rice on credit tended to increase the indebtedness of the coolie, and for that reason they thought it undesirable that planters should issue rice on credit?—My idea is that if a coolie has not the money it is better to feed him than to let him starve.

F-800. *Mr. Cliff*: I was only on this recommendation, and if the witness cannot give us any information I will leave the matter?—I do not know of any case in which rice was issued on credit in this district.

Mr. Beddoe: The granting of rice on credit has been absolutely done away with on all gardens since that recommendation.

F-801. *The Chairman*: So that there is now no piling up of credit in connection with the issue of rice?—No.

F-802. *Mr. Cliff*: I want to ask a question about the title which a tea garden labourer has to land. If a tea garden labourer clears some jungle, and is allotted two *keers* of land, what right has he on that land?—If the land is on the tea garden land, for which the tea company is paying a revenue to Government, he has such right as the tea company may give him. The crop is his. If it is outside, then he becomes a tenant of Government. He gets a lease and he gets settlement.

F-803. Is there any written agreement of tenancy between the tenant and the company?—No.

F-804. Or any lease?—No.

F-805. If he is turned off the land, has the tenant any right to compensation for clearing the jungle?—He will have a case against the garden in the courts. If he had grown a crop on it and was not allowed to reap it he would have a claim.

F-806. I am not dealing with the question of the crop. If a tea garden labourer acquires land and cultivates it, has he any right to compensation for his work done on that land if he is turned off it?—I do not understand what compensation is wanted for clearing the land.

The Chairman: Compensation for work done in clearing the jungle and making the land suitable for cultivation?—And then he runs away, do you mean?

F-807. *Mr. Cliff*: If he be given notice to leave (which the Company has got a right to exercise), is he entitled under any Act to compensation?

The Chairman: What we call in England compensation for improvement?—I cannot imagine such a case occurring.

F-808. He clears the jungle at his own risk?—People do not dismiss coolies like that. I think he might have a case in the courts if he has done the work and is not allowed to reap the fruits of it—if he has put seed in the soil and is not allowed to reap it.

F-809. *Mr. Ahmed*: Suppose a tenant cuts the jungle and clears the virgin soil, improves the land and makes it fit for cultivation. If he wants to leave the land or if he is evicted from the land is there any law here in this Province, just like the Bengal Tenancy Act, which will entitle him to get compensation for the improvements he has effected?—He usually does not leave the land, nor is he evicted like that. Why should he?

F-810. There is no such law here?—No.

F-811. So that a tenant may occupy a land for 20 years and still have no right of occupancy?—He has no prescriptive right even, is that not so?—I do not know.

F-812. You are also an Inspector of Factories and in that capacity you have to look after the health and conditions of work of the factory workers here in this Province. In what way are you qualified to discharge those duties?—I am neither a doctor nor an engineer, it is quite true.

F-813. Is it not necessary that an inspector should have those qualifications just as it is in other provinces?—I do not know whether it is or not; that is a matter of opinion.

F-814. Why has your Government not appointed a qualified man instead of asking the District Magistrate who is not a qualified man to do the work?—I cannot answer for Government; it is a matter for them to decide entirely.

F-815. You appoint a Bengali Babu to teach the children. He does not know Mahrathi or Madras languages and how do you expect him to teach the children in their vernaculars?—From the point of view of good education is it not desirable

to appoint men who know the different vernaculars of the coolies?—From my experience of the tea gardens in the Assam Valley I find that the children quickly learn to speak Assamese. Here it is a kind of Hindustani with a mixture of Bengali. If the children are going to learn any vernacular which will be useful to them—they do not know their original Madrasee—it is much better for them to learn the local vernacular which is the language of the tea garden clerical staff.

F-816. *The Chairman*: That is taught in the district board schools?—Yes, Bengali in this valley and Assamese in the other.

F-817. *Mr. Ahmed*: Suppose a coolie wanted to be repatriated, would he be sent home at the expense of the garden?—If I found that he had been recruited by fraud or misrepresentation and was unfit for the garden I could call upon the manager to pay his return fare. If within 24 hours he did not pay his return fare I could pay it myself from Government and make him pay afterwards. I could recover that from him as a public debt.

F-818. But that is only when the man has been recruited by fraud or misrepresentation. Suppose a coolie has finished his term of contract and wants to go home, is there any provision for you or the manager to pay him his travelling expenses?—I do not know. There is a fund for repatriating sickly coolies, but merely discontinued coolies. I am afraid, will have to pay their own fares. Surely if they have finished their term they would have sufficient money with them.

F-819. So there is no provision for repatriating coolies who have finished their term?—Not that I know of.

F-820. Was that not one of the causes of the troubles in 1921?—Not to my knowledge. That was not so.

F-821. You said that the Superintendent of Police was sometimes asked to inspect the gardens. Does he not go in his uniform with a number of constables and do not the coolies get frightened?—On only one occasion that I know of, the Superintendent of Police went there in his ordinary kit without any constables accompanying him.

F-822. *The Chairman*: He goes there as an ordinary inspector of tea gardens?—They go like civil officers. For instance, the Civil Surgeon does not go there with his rubber gloves on.

F-823. *Mr. Ahmed*: Even in the event of a riot in the garden does he go there like that?

The Chairman: If he is called upon in his police capacity he goes in his uniform accompanied by his men?—Yes, that is so.

F-824. *Mr. Ahmed*: Do not the coolies know that he is a man of dual responsibility and get afraid of him?—They may know him if they recognize him, but I do not think they are afraid of him.

F-825. Do you follow the International Labour Conventions regarding the welfare of labour?—I have been looking after the welfare of labour even before Geneva thought of it, ever since I was put in charge of a planting district.

F-826. I take it that you thoroughly follow these Conventions?—Not a bit.

F-827. You will have no objection to apply Trade Union legislation and Trade Disputes legislation to this Province?—If I knew that any legislation of that kind would do good to the men I would be in favour of it.

F-828. *Rev. Saikia*: How long do you stay in a fairly big garden to inspect it thoroughly?—Two to 3 hours.

F-829. Is it enough?—It is a matter of opinion.

F-830. Does the manager go round with you when you inspect the garden?—He generally does.

F-831. Are you generally satisfied with what you see in those gardens?—I write down in my report whether I am satisfied or not. If there is anything to criticise I do so in my report.

(The witness withdrew.)

Rev. E. R. SINGH.

F-832. *The Chairman*: I understand that you have been working for great many years as a missionary in Assam?—Yes.

F-833. And that your work has been to a considerable extent among the coolies of the tea gardens?—Yes.

F-834. For how many years have you been carrying out your work?—Since 1896.

F-835. In that time no doubt you have seen very great changes?—Yes.

F-836. Would you be good enough to give the Commission the benefit of your experience. In the first place, can you tell us if you think the condition of the coolies has substantially improved in recent years; and in the second place, have you anything to say to us by way of recommendations with regard to their condition?—When I was in Assam Valley in 1896 the pay of a man was Rs. 7 a month and the pay of a woman was Rs. 6 a month. For that a man had to hoe 30 *nals* and a woman 25 *nals*. At that time everything was cheap. They are getting the same pay now; but the cost of living has greatly increased.

F-837. Do you think the coolie is better off now than he was?—No, because of the high price of foodstuffs, clothing, etc., now.

F-838. Do you think that the increase in the earnings has not been more than the increase in the cost of living for them?—In 1896 a man was getting Rs. 7 a month and a woman Rs. 6 a month, and they are getting the same now.

F-839. Were you here in 1921 at the time of the troubles in the tea gardens when a great number of coolies left the gardens?—Yes.

F-840. Do you remember the enquiry that was held in 1921-22?—No, I do not.

F-841. Do you know what cash wages the coolies are earning now?—Yes, the men are earning 4 annas a day and the women 3 annas a day for their fixed tasks.

F-842. These are the tasks which take them four or five hours to complete?—Yes.

F-843. In addition to that do they have paddy land to cultivate?—Very little.

F-844. Are you speaking now of the Surma Valley or the Assam Valley?—Of the Surma Valley. In the Assam Valley most of the people have their own land—Government land.

F-845. Do you come in contact with a number of people who have come here in the last two or three years as new recruits?—No, I do not.

F-846. Therefore you cannot tell us whether or not they are happy and comfortable?—No.

F-847. Have you anything to say to the Commission with regard to the method of recruiting labour for Assam?—No.

F-848. Have you had experience of any people who have been brought here by wrong methods?—A long time ago.

F-849. I am speaking of recent times?—No.

F-850. In recent times you have not heard of any wrong methods of recruitment?—No.

F-851. As far as you know, the people who have come recently have come willingly?—I think so.

F-852. Do you know many people who first worked upon the tea gardens and then were able to take Government land themselves and become independent land owners in the last ten years?—Yes, in Assam Valley.

F-853. You do not find amongst the coolies a desire to return to their own country?—Many of them say they wish to, but they have not money enough to return.

F-854. Is there anything you would like to say to us about the housing of the coolies?—In some places I have seen small houses with corrugated roofs. They do not like them, because in summer they are too hot and in winter they are too cold, and also the room is not big enough.

F-855. They prefer the thatched house?—Yes.

F-856. Would you like to say anything to us about the education of the coolies? It would be better if schools were established, because by that means the coolies could escape from the clutches of the shopkeepers as well as be able to write to their friends or relations expressing their difficulties or prosperity.

F-857. Are you speaking of the education of the children or of the adults?—The children.

F-858. You want children under 10 years of age to have education?—Yes.

F-859. Do you think they would come willingly to the schools?—Yes, if the managers would persuade them and explain the matter to them.

F-860. Is there a school attached to your own Mission?—I have been transferred recently but I used to teach the young men at night.

F-861. Where are you working now?—Thaligram, 14 miles away from here.

F-862. Close to the tea gardens?—In the tea gardens.

F-863. Is there a school in that tea garden?—Yes, the Government school.

F-864. How many children come to it?—Over 30.

F-865. Out of how many?—The garden children do not come, but the shopkeepers' children do.

F-866. You think the garden children might come if they were more encouraged by the managers?—Yes.

F-867. Do you want to say anything about the vegetable gardens?—Some of the coolies have none.

F-868. Do you mean that there are some who would willingly cultivate?—Yes, everybody.

F-869. Does that apply to the tea gardens, generally speaking, or to one particular garden?—Generally.

F-870. Generally you think there ought to be more opportunity for them to cultivate their own vegetable plots?—Yes.

F-871. Have you anything else you would like to say to us. We are anxious that you should feel that you have said everything to us that you would like to say?—No, I have nothing else to say.

F-872. *Mr. Ahmed*: You have stated that the coolies are, as a rule, getting Rs. 7 for men and Rs. 6 for women, and that the price of foodstuffs, clothing, etc., has gone up. Do I understand that they cannot go back to their native villages, as many of them would like to go, because they have no money?—Yes.

The Chairman: The witness did not say that they were anxious to go back to their villages.

F-873. *Mr. Ahmed*: Some of them; but for want of money they cannot go?—No.

F-874. Are they indebted to the *banias*?—I cannot tell you definitely, but sometimes people come to me to ask me for a loan.

F-875. You are speaking generally?—Yes.

F-876. Is there any *bania* here?—Yes, there are a good many *banias*.

F-877. Is there any other way of getting a loan from any other source than the *bania*, at a small rate of interest?

The Chairman: Can they get a loan from the gardens if they ask for it, at a low rate of interest?—If they can get it from the gardens why should they come to me?

F-878. *Mr. Ahmed*: Do you think that a number of teachers would be available if provision were made for education?—Yes.

(The witness withdrew.)

ASSAM.

Forty-Eighth Meeting.

PANCHGRAM.

Tuesday, the 7th January 1930.

PRESENT :

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (Chairman).

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| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | MR. JOHN CLIFF. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. | LT.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S., <i>Medical Assessor.</i> |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA | Assistant Commissioners. |
| MR. A. B. BEDDOW, Urrunsbund Tea Estate, Cachar. | |
| MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN | <i>Lady Assessor.</i> |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. | |
| MR. A. DIBBIN | <i>Joint Secretaries.</i> |

RAM PRASAD GOALA (Mr. Clow interpreted).

F-879. What work do you do?—I dig clay. When there is none of that work to do I carry coal.

F-880. What district do you come from?—My home district is Fyzabad.

F-881. When did you come to this country?—Eight or nine years ago.

F-882. Did a *Sardar* bring you?—Yes.

F-883. Whom did he bring with you?—My father and mother.

F-884. Did he bring any others?—There were five or six.

F-885. Did they belong to your own village?—Yes.

F-886. Where are they?—They have gone back to their country.

F-887. How did they get back?—They escaped and ran away.

F-888. How did they get money to go?—They did it by working.

F-889. How long did you stay in the garden?—Six months.

F-890. Why did you leave it?—Because I did not get enough to live on.

F-891. How much did you get?—I got 3 annas a day.

F-892. What did the *sardar* tell you?—He told me that in Assam I should get large pay; he said I would get Rs. 15 or Rs. 16 a month for light work.

F-893. Where did you go after you left the tea garden?—I took service with the Oil Company.

F-894. How much do you get at present?—Rs. 18 a month.

F-895. Do you prefer staying here or would you like to go back to your own country?—I would much rather go to my own country.

F-896. Why do you want to go back when you will not get the same pay in Fyzabad?—In Fyzabad I can get cultivating work; I am not used to the work here.

F-897. What did you do in your own country?—I was a ploughman.

F-898. In which garden did you work?—It is five or six years ago and I do not remember the name but it was in the Assam Valley.

F-899. How did you get here?—I saved up enough money by working.

F-900. Were you at Digboi?—No.

F-901. In what district was the tea garden?—It was in Sibsagar.

F-902. Have you saved any money here?—How can I save any money because there are two of us working and my mother does not work, so there are three to feed.

F-903. Did your mother work when you got to the tea gardens?—No, we did not allow her to work.

F-904. Do your mother and father also want to go back to their country?—Yes.

F-905. Do you work every day here?—There is a half holiday on Saturday and I work till 12 on Sunday. We do not get a holiday on bazaar day.

F-906. How much does your father get?—He gets Rs. 16 a month.

F-907. Where do you draw your pay?—In the office.

F-908. Who gives it to you?—The Camp Baboo.

F-909. What are the women paid?—They get 7 annas a day.

F-910. How many hours do you work?—We work from 7 to 12 and get an hour's leave and then we work from 1 to 5.

F-911. Did the *Sardar* who brought you belong to your village?—Yes, the *Sardar* belonged to my village. He ran away from the garden about two months after he landed us there.

F-912. Did he give you an advance?—No.

F-913. How old are you?—16 or 18 years.

F-914. *Mrs. Ataur Rahman*: He is older than that.

F-915. Are you married?—No.

F-916. When you came to the garden were you a small boy?—Yes.

F-917. Do you have a house, rent-free?—Yes.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. D. P. TRENCH, Field Agent at the Panchgram Oil Wells of the Burmah Oil Co., Ltd.

F-918. *The Chairman*: How do you get your labour here?—We do not actually recruit any labour; they come in from the surrounding villages and apply for work and we take them on; they live in the *bustis* locally.

F-919. Do you have as many applicants as you require?—Yes, there is usually plenty of coolie labour available.

F-920. Are the coolies working on the land before they come to you?—Yes, and they usually still work on the land after they come to us; they have their own patches of paddy which they cultivate, and spend perhaps three-fourths of their time with us and the other quarter on their own cultivation.

F-921. Do they work any fixed hours with you?—Yes, they all work fixed hours, varying from 8 hours to 12 hours per day.

F-922. How many days a week do they work?—Six or seven. What are the coolies actually doing?—Digging and mixing mud, transport work, unloading and loading, etc., etc.

F-923. Then they are not actually on the oil field?—The labour employed on wells, production, and that sort of thing is skilled labour; they do rather different work.

F-924. What do you pay the coolies?—Nobody gets paid, less than Rs. 14 a month, except apprentices. Anybody who receives less than Rs. 20 a month is entitled to a bonus of Re. 1, provided he works every day in the month. This is to encourage attendance, but not many coolies earn the extra rupee because they prefer to go off and look after their own paddy after they have earned ten or twelve rupees. A skilled labourer is paid anything from Rs. 30 to 250 a month; drilling coolies get from Rs. 14 to Rs. 40.

F-925. You pay considerably higher wages than are paid to the tea garden coolie labour?—I do not think we pay more taking into account the amount of work that is done; a tea garden coolie does not actually get so much money but he does not usually work such long hours.

F-926. He only works five hours a day?—He works perhaps only three or four hours a day and after he has earned three or four annas he will go home.

F-927. And work on his own paddy field?—I think he usually returns to his lines, but we have nothing like that here; our permanent staff of coolie labour is very small in proportion to the amount of work we do. For anything big we employ contractors and they make their own arrangements for labour.

F-928. *Mr. Cliff.* What are the women paid?—We do not employ any women on the field itself and the percentage of women employed on outside work such as digging clay is almost negligible.

F-929. A woman has just told us that she gets 7 annas a day. Is that right?—Yes, coolie women get paid at the same rate as the men.

F-930. *Mr. Clow:* If you knew coolies had come from a tea garden would you employ them here?—We would employ them until we knew they had come from the tea garden concerned and if we were then asked to return them we should do so provided the coolies were not unwilling to go back. Cases of that kind have been very rare: in the last three years I think we have had only 2 applications for the return of such coolies. We do not knowingly take on any tea garden coolies because we recognize that the tea gardens have gone to considerable expense in recruiting their labour.

F-931. *Mr. Cliff:* Did you return the two coolies with regard to whom application for return was made?—In the cases I am thinking of the tea gardens sent over a *sardar* who identified the coolies and took them back. But that was some years ago. I think recently tea garden coolies have had very much more liberty to go away. On the tea gardens the contract with a coolie is not binding now-a-days; he can depart if and when he wants to without giving any warning.

F-932. *The Chairman:* Do you find that the tea garden coolies are still under the impression that they are bound by contract?—I have little experience of tea garden labour and I do not know.

F-933. Are the coolies working on this particular tea garden local?—I think they are local. Originally they were probably recruited, but of recent years they have been multiplying and they have their own tea garden village at Badarpurghat. I do not think *Mr. Stoker* has done any recruiting for some time; but in any case we do not have any dealings with his labour; it consists largely of women pluckers and it is labour which is not really suitable for our purposes.

F-934. *Mr. Cliff:* Are you under the necessity of housing your workers?—No; we think not. There are a few barracks available for any one who has not got anywhere to go temporarily, as, for instance, during a flood. These particular quarters were practically demolished during the recent flood and they have not since been repaired.

F-935. Were these quarters put up by the Company?—Yes.

F-936. Was there any special reason why you should house any of them?—At one time when we were constructing the refinery we had a lot of labour imported for the big transport jobs involved and we found it necessary to supply quarters for quite a number. We had a labour pool of about 150 in those days, but during the last few years we have not had a labour pool of our own; we have carried a very small nucleus of coolie labour and when we have had any big constructional or transport jobs to do we have put them out on contract.

F-937. Generally speaking, you do not house your labour?—No, we do not set out to house the labour employed on Badarpur field.

F-938. With regard to the few workers for whom you supply houses do you charge rent?—No.

F-939. *The Chairman:* The others live in their own villages?—Yes, within about three miles radius. They come in over these rivers and we have an arrangement by which we pay the ferry charges.

F-940. *Mr. Cliff*: Is there a school near here?—There are three schools within 5 miles, two secondary schools and one primary school; and we are also starting a school on the field.

F-941. *Mr. Ahmed*: Are those schools under the District Board?—I think two of them are.

F-942. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Why are you starting a school?—It has not been started by the Company; it has been started by the clerks themselves; they have a certain number of children whom they do not want to send to the other schools owing to the distance.

F-943. Do you employ any children?—We employ a few children only as office *chokras*.

F-944. What are the working hours at the wells?—We work an eight hour shift on rotary wells and 10 hours daylight on cable wells.

F-945. Then you do not work continuously on that type of plant?—Usually on rotary drilling only, in which case 8 hour shifts are worked continuously. The ordinary field hours are from 6 to 4; the engineering hours are 7 to 5. The men bring their lunch and Muhammadans have a break of one extra hour for prayer on Fridays.

F-946. Do you do night work and overtime?—Yes; any overtime is paid for.

F-947. At what rate?—At the rate at which they are normally paid for daylight work.

F-948. Do you come under the Factories Act?—Our Machine Shop and the Refinery come under the Factories Act.

F-949. In the places which come under the Factories Act, when you work overtime you have to pay one and a quarter?—When we want to work at night we work 8 hour shifts. We do very little overtime; any overtime that is worked is paid for at the daily rate.

F-950. What is the total number of employees on your books?—The total number of employees at the present time, excluding clerks and junior staff, is about 789.

F-951. How many women do you employ?—Perhaps 20 or 30.

F-952. How many children do you employ?—About a dozen only as office *chokras*.

F-953. Have you had any bad accidents?—Yes, we have had a few.

F-954. Do you come under the Workmen's Compensation Act?—We do; at least we pay compensation in accordance with the rates laid down in the Workmen's Compensation Act.

F-955. Are you insured with regard to your liability under the Workmen's Compensation Act?—No, we do not insure outside for the purposes of compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act.

F-956. *Mr. Ahmed*: You do not give any leave with pay?—No, not to coolie labour unless injured at work in which case the coolie concerned receives half pay for the period off.

F-957. There is no medical help given to them?—Yes, there is a hospital with 6 beds in which free medical treatment is given.

F-958. Do a lot of them go there?—About 90 per cent.

F-959. Is pure drinking water supplied by you in the working places?—Not distilled water, but quite good water for drinking purposes; reservoir water is laid on to all barracks and the junior staff quarters are fitted with taps in each kitchen and bath room. Perhaps you would like to go over the hospital.

(The witness withdrew.)

ASSAM.

Forty-ninth Meeting.

JORHAT (ON THE MOABUND TEA ESTATE).

Wednesday, the 8th January 1930.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (*Chairman*).

| | |
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| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | MR. JOHN CLIFF. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. | LT.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S., <i>Medical Assessor</i> . |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA .. | .. <i>Assistant Commissioner</i> . |
| MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN .. | .. <i>Lady Assessor</i> . |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. .. | .. } <i>Joint Secretaries</i> . |
| MR. A. DIBBIN .. | .. } |

SHAM KAMAR, (Moabund Tea Estate).

F-960. For how many years have you worked on this tea garden?—Between 10 and 12 years. I have my wife here and my two sons and two daughters.

F-961. Have you been sent out as a *sardar* to recruit in Ranchi?—Yes. I have been to Ranchi to get recruits six times.

F-962. How many did you bring back with you last time?—I generally take leave by saying that I am going to get recruits. The last time I went I could not persuade anybody to come with me. When I ask for leave to go for recruits I am allowed to go.

F-963. But you sometimes go just to visit your own country?—I have always gone on a *sardar* pass, not otherwise.

F-964. Have you brought any of your people from your village on any of the occasions on which you have gone there as a *sardar*?—On one occasion there was a lot of illness there, so I brought some of my own people here.

F-965. Are they still here?—Yes.

F-966. Are they happy here?—They are quite happy here. If some of them do not like it they run away.

F-967. How much do you earn?—Rs. 12 a month for 6 days' work a week. My wife gets 4 annas a day.

F-968. Have you got some *khet* land?—Yes.

F-969. How much do you get from your *khet* land?—Sometimes I get a good harvest and sometimes I do not.

F-970. How much paddy did you get this year?—I only got 9 maunds. I had a very poor harvest.

F-971. Do you owe any money?—I have some debts with the shop-keepers. At one shop I owe Rs. 1-10 and at another shop I owe Rs. 9-15 and amongst the coolies I have a few debts.

F-972. You say you have been to your home country as a *sardar* six times?—Yes.

F-973. Did you not save any money out of the advances you got from the Company for those journeys?—When I start from here I get Rs. 2 as advance, and as I go to the different depots I get money there—from 4 annas to 6 annas. I go along like that until I arrive at Ranchi.

F-974. What advance did you get at the depot at Ranchi?—The first time I went to Ranchi I got Rs. 10. Now I do not get that Rs. 10 advance. If I bring back coolies I get it, but if I do not get any I am returned to the garden.

F-975. Are there many other people from Ranchi who are on this tea garden and who have been here for some years?—Yes, there are many. Sometime ago there was great illness in Ranchi, and since then a lot of people have come here. Before that time there were not very many from my own place.

F-976. Are they better off here than they were at home in Ranchi?—There was not enough work for every one at Ranchi. Here we get work and get paid for it.

F-977. You say that the last time you went to Ranchi you brought back no recruits. Why would not the people come with you?—The headman of the village very often dissuades them from coming. The village headman says to them, "Why do you want to go? You have your land here. I will try and improve your conditions here. Stay on here." He does not stop them from coming, but he dissuades them from coming.

F-978. Instead of borrowing from the *bania* why did you not ask for an advance from the garden?—I get advances from the manager, but I am talking of my shop accounts.

F-979. How many coolies from Ranchi have you brought here, and how many are here now?—The first time I went I recruited one man. The second time I went I brought my mother and my wife and children. The third time I went I brought my wife's people. There are 6 people in the family. I have been twice since then and I have not been able to get anybody. On four occasions I brought people back and on the last two occasions I did not bring any back.

F-980. Are the people you brought here on the first four occasions still here?—The man I got the first time has died. The second one is living here, and my family and my wife's people are here.

F-981. Have you any cattle?—One cow and nine goats.

F-982. Why are you borrowing when you are getting good pay and living so well?—I get into debt because I drink, and drink costs money, and I have to feed and keep my children.

F-983. Did you say that without drink you could not do work?—If I have to go any distance at all I feel a bit run down unless I have some drink to brace me up again.

F-984. Do your wife and children work?—My daughters and my wife work, but my sons do not as they are too small.

F-985. What did the three of them earn last week?—My wife got Rs. 1-4 during the week. My daughter got 18 annas in the week. Only one of my daughters works, the other is too small.

F-986. How much do you get?—Rs. 12 a month.

F-987. What did you earn last week?—Rs. 2-8 after having 8 annas deducted for the advance.

F-988. Did you work 6 days?—Yes.

F-989. Did you work 6 whole days or only half days?—I am given work to do and when I do that work I get 8 annas.

F-990. Any *ticca*?—No. I am not supposed to go from the land without the Sahib's orders.

F-991. Do you get a bonus at the end of the month or at the end of the year?—I get *girmit* money. A man gets Rs. 12 a year, a woman Rs. 6 a year and a child gets nothing. If a man goes away with this *girmit* money he will get into trouble. If a man goes away after he has got the *girmit* money he will be caught and brought back.

F-992. When did you get it?—I got it before. After a year I got Rs. 12. I am paid it before and not after. When a man comes to this part, if he comes on contract for three years he is allowed to take an advance of Rs. 12 a year. Sometimes he takes it there and sometimes he also takes it here.

F-993. How many years have you been here?—I worked for 7 years as a coolie and then I was made a sardar. Since then I have been recruiting. I am not sure about the years, as I do not know how to count them.

F-994. Do any coolies leave this garden and go elsewhere?—I do not know, but sometimes they are not pleased and they run away.

F-995. Have you had advances from the manager quite recently?—No.

F-996. I see from the books that you owe to the manager now about Rs. 40?—Since the new manager has come I have not taken any advance from him. I have from the other manager, but I am not sure how much.

F-997. The books show that at the end of July you owed Rs. 38 and it has increased now to about Rs. 40?—I am not sure. I do not know.

(The witness withdrew.)

OTI GOA of TARA KHUL, (Moabund Tea Estate).

F-998. How long have you worked on this garden?—One year.

F-999. Are you better off here than you were in your own country?—I am much better off here.

F-1000. Have you your wife and children with you?—No.

F-1001. Have you any wish to go back to your own country?—I want to go and bring my wife and family.

F-1002. You think they would be happier here?—Yes. They will be happy if they come up here.

F-1003. Did you get any *girmit* money?—I have one month left to go yet. I have been here only 11 months.

F-1004. Your agreement is for one year?—Yes.

F-1005. But you intend to stay?—Yes.

F-1006. *Sir Alexander Murray*: He also says that he will get a bonus at the end of 12 months, and not at the beginning. When his other month is over he will get the contract money of Rs. 12.

F-1007. Are you going home for your wife and family next month?—When I get leave I shall go and bring my wife and children.

F-1008. Have you asked for leave to go?—No.

F-1009. Do you write letters to your wife?—No. Nor have I had any letters from her.

F-1010. Have you never asked the manager to have a letter written to your wife?—No.

F-1011. Have you any *khet* land?—No.

F-1012. Have you saved any money while you have been here?—I sent home Rs. 10. I have not been able to save any money because I spend it on eating and drinking.

F-1013. What wages do you get?—Rs. 3 a week.

F-1014. Who do you live with?—We are five men staying together.

F-1015. How many hours do you work a day?—I go out in the morning at about 9 and I return home at about 12.

F-1016. Why do you not work longer?—If I could get *ticca* work I would do it.

F-1017. Have you not been asked to do any extra work?—No.

F-1018. Do you work every day?—Yes, 6 days a week.

(The witness withdrew.)

KATAUR, KHOND, (Moabund Tea Estate).

F-1019. How long have you been here?—Eleven months.

F-1020. Did you come on an agreement for one year?—Yes, I came on a year's agreement, but I have not taken the Rs. 12 as yet.

F-1021. Do you like the work here?—Yes.

F-1022. Do you propose to stay here?—I have my wife and family here and I should like to stay.

F-1023. Did your wife and family come with you?—Yes.

F-1024. And they are happy and settled here?—Yes.

F-1025. Who brought you here?—The *sardar*.

F-1026. Do you expect to get a bonus when you have finished your 12 months?—Yes.

F-1027. How much do you expect to get?—Rs. 12.

F-1028. Is that for having worked regularly during the year?—If I work 12 months I shall get Rs. 12.

F-1029. Who told you that?—I have heard it. Everybody says that if they work they get a *girmi* money of Rs. 12.

F-1030. Can you go away when you have got your Rs. 12?—I cannot go away at my own pleasure. If I ask the manager and he gives me a license, then I can go.

F-1031. Can you go away now if you want to?—How can I go?

F-1032. Why cannot you go?—I do not want to go away because I like it here.

F-1033. Can you go away to work for a contractor in Jorhat at more money?—I do not want to go.

F-1034. What wages do you earn?—Rs. 3 a week.

F-1035. Does your wife work?—Yes. She gets Rs. 2-4.

F-1036. Do you work every day?—I work 6 days, but if I am not well I do not work.

F-1037. Do you do *ticca*?—No.

F-1038. Have you been asked?—No.

F-1039. Have you any land?—I have only been here a year, so I have not any *khet* land.

F-1040. Do you want to get it when you can?—Yes.

F-1041. Have you any goats?—No. I have got nothing.

F-1042. Do you owe any money?—No.

F-1043. Have you saved any money?—I have saved a little.

F-1044. If others want to go can they go without a license?—How can I say about other people.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. J. B. LEONARD, Manager of Moabund Tea Estate, Jorhat.

F-1045. *The Chairman*: How long have you been here?—For not quite a year. I came here last April.

F-1046. You have had a much longer experience of tea garden work, have you not?—I came out in 1906.

F-1047. All your experience has been in this Valley?—Yes.

F-1048. I understand that you are responsible both for this and some other tea gardens?—Yes.

F-1049. How many acres of tea in all are you responsible for?—4,300 acres.

F-1050. What working force does that represent?—About 8,200.

F-1051. That is men, women and children?—That is the number of workers. The population is somewhere about 16,000.

F-1052. How far is your labour force permanent?—All of it is permanent. We have not any short-time labour. Our standard is 2 coolies an acre. We try to have two workers to an acre. That is the standard we are trying to maintain.

F-1053. Have you that standard now?—Very nearly. In this Company there are two souls working to an acre.

F-1054. How many coolies did you have to recruit last year?—106 in 1928 and 206 in 1929—men, women and children, a few of these are not workers.

F-1055. About 300 in the two years?—Yes, workers.

F-1056. Those were all recruited by sending out *sardars*?—Yes.

F-1057. Do you find as a rule that the people you bring here settle down permanently?—Most of the family people do. Some of the single men do not.

F-1058. What happens to the single men who do not stay?—They either leave the garden or are sent down as *sardars* and do not come back.

F-1059. When a man wants to get back to his home country, he applies to be sent down as a *sardar* and you let him go?—Yes.

F-1060. It is in that case a form of repatriation?—That is what it amounts to.

F-1061. What proportion of *sardars* have you lost in that way?—Last year we lost 65. The year before, of the 214 who were sent down, 181 returned. In 1928 the figure was 33 and it was 65 last year.

F-1062. The proportion is about 1 in 7?—Of the total number sent down, yes.

F-1063. We have had a statement made in one quarter that one-third of the *sardars* sent down do not return?—Our percentage is not so big as that.

F-1064. You have a large proportion who do return?—Yes.

F-1065. Do those who do not return make a practice, from garden to garden, of taking advances and bonuses and really make themselves professional recruiters rather than tea garden workers?—Yes, there are a number of them who do that.

F-1066. You are quite sure about it?—Yes. But we hear of them and we can get our recruiting expenses. We can get from the garden where they have gone to as a new coolie our recruiting expenses if we can trace the coolies.

F-1067. You mean that a certain number of so-called *sardars* go without any intention of trying to recruit any one for the garden by whom they have been sent?—That is the impression which one gets.

F-1068. They take the money, and then get themselves recruited as new coolies. They go down as *sardars*, and then to another garden as new coolies, and promptly become *sardars* for that garden, and so on?—Yes.

F-1069. How many cases of that kind have you known?—I mean actual cases and not mere impressions?—There are a good many. I could not give you the number. We had one instance this year. In some years there would probably be three or four.

F-1070. Have you got the particulars of those cases?—I should have to turn up the names, but I could let you have the names. There might only be just a few. I do not say that there are many who make a practice of doing it.

F-1071. It is rather important that we should quite understand where this great leakage of *sardars* arises. It looks absurd on the face of it that the tea industry as a whole in Assam should be sending out 40,000 *sardars* and that those 40,000 *sardars* should only produce one recruit each on the average. It looks as though no businessman would long sustain a system of that kind. Therefore we are anxious to know where the leakage occurs. One statement put before us is that one-third of the *sardars* do not return, and they simply take it as a method of repatriation at the Company's expense. You tell us that your leakage is much less than that—1 in 6 or 7. However, even here you say you do know of some cases where there has grown up what I may call a professional *sardar* turning himself over and over again, making his money not out of hoeing tea, but out of the practice of going down as a *sardar* and coming back as a new coolie?—I think there are cases like that.

F-1072. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you know of more than one case?—We have had three cases in a year either of people who should have come here but have gone elsewhere or of people who should have gone elsewhere but have come here. I think you will find that this is so on a number of tea gardens; but that would not account for all the leakage.

F-1073. *The Chairman*: We have heard of men being sent down after a fortnight. In the case of this particular garden do you ever send a *sardar* down who has only been a few weeks here?—Only in exceptional cases. As a rule we try to keep them for a year, in order to let them see what the conditions are before sending them down.

F-1074. Suppose a man says, "I want to go down and fetch my wife and children," after he has been here a month; would you let him go and give him a license?—Yes.

F-1075. He may turn out to be one of those frauds?—We try to check it by asking other people who have been down there.

F-1076. With regard to the three cases which you mentioned a moment ago, how long were those coolies on the garden before they were sent down?—They were all comparatively new coolies who had worked for about a year or possibly a little under. They were not old coolies.

F-1077. We have been told that in some cases coolies who have only worked for a few weeks and who have asked to go down as *sardars* have been sent down as *sardars*. That is not the case here?—Only exceptionally.

F-1078. That is to say, where you feel confident that it is a genuine case of a man wanting to go to bring back his relatives?—Yes.

F-1079. Do you have many cases here of people who find the life not to their liking and who desire to return to their own country?—No, we have not many cases of people wanting to return to their country. There are a certain number who apply for permission to go out into the *busti* to settle down.

F-1080. To take up land and be independent?—Yes.

F-1081. Those are the ones who have saved money?—Yes, old coolies.

F-1082. Take these 300 odd coolies whom you have recruited in the last two years. How many of those do you expect to make permanent settlers on your estate here?—It is difficult to say. It varies from year to year. I should say about 70 per cent.

F-1083. What happens to the other 30 per cent.?—They drift away, or go down as *sardars* and do not return.

F-1084. You are not conscious of having men who are here against their will?—Not that I know of.

F-1085. Supposing you became aware of any family who were unhappy or uncomfortable here and who would rather be back in their own country. What would happen to them?—They would have to pay their own way down, I presume. They would leave the garden.

F-1086. If a man applied to go as a *sardar* what would happen?—He would go down as a *sardar*.

F-1087. *Mr. Cliff*: With his wife and family?—It depends.

F-1088. *The Chairman*: Do you ever send a man with his wife as *sardars*?—Yes. Sometimes they go down with a special license—what we call "*policy wallahs*"; that is to say, people who want to go back to their own country at the Company's expense and who are not really *bona fide* recruiters. They go down with this license with liberty to stay there if they wish to.

F-1089. On one of two grounds—either that they were improperly induced to come here or that they are unsuited to the life on the tea gardens?—Yes.

F-1090. Is the license a magistrate's license?—We send them down as *sardars*. They get the ordinary license. We send them down as "*policy wallahs*" with instructions to the local Agent that if they want to return they can do so, and bring coolies. They can recruit. If they do not want to come back they stay down there.

F-1091. That is your mode of repatriation?—Yes.

F-1092. Is that peculiar to your garden or is it general?—That is general.

F-1093. Does that mean that any family who find themselves unhappy here can go back and are not kept in any way against their will?—Yes, that would be the chief reason. If a family have been here for some time and have been good workers and they come to me and say, "We want to go back to our country. Give us a license. We will go down. If we do not like it we will come back," on that understanding they go down as "*policy wallahs*."

F-1094. *Mr. Cliff*: Take the case of a man who has been here 12 months and is quite unhappy?—It is not the general rule to send him down as a "*policy wallah*."

F-1095. You say he either drifts into a *busti* or finds his own way back?—Yes.

F-1096. *The Chairman*: You are, no doubt, aware that in the recruiting districts there is still lingering a considerable prejudice against coming to Assam. You have been in the tea industry a long time and you know how long prejudices remain, in country districts particularly. We have been told that one cause of the prejudice against coming to Assam is that it is such a long way off, and that if

people's relatives come here they are lost and they will never hear of them again. I asked one of your men just now if he had written to his wife during the 11 months he had been here. He said he had sent her Rs. 10, but had not written to her; nor had she written to him. We know that they cannot read or write, but surely there could be means by which the management of a garden could keep these people here in contact with those whom they had left behind?—A great many of them do correspond.

F-1097. Through your office?—Some of them, and others through people in the lines who can write.

F-1098. Would it not be a good thing, and make for the contentment of the people, and also for the good of recruiting, if the management took a particular interest in maintaining touch between the people who come here and their villages, especially in the first year or two?—I think it would be a good thing.

F-1099. It seems to us rather a serious thing not to have heard from your wife for 11 months?—I suppose they do hear. There is a big movement up and down. There is a good deal of information going up and down all the time by the *sardars*.

F-1100. No doubt there is, but might it not be worth while for the garden itself to encourage new recruits particularly to correspond with their relatives and to ask them if they have written to their wives telling them how nice it is here, and to give facilities for having letters written at your own expense?

Mr. Beddoe: I have tried that on my gardens. I have engaged men who can write in two or three different languages. Not a great number of the coolies avail themselves of that opportunity of writing. I was of your opinion, Sir, that if they had facilities either through the garden office or through the management they would probably avail themselves of it and write many letters. I tried it for two or three years, but on the whole very few letters were written.

F-1101. *Mr. Cliff*: Would not there be a disinclination on the part of most workers to have their employers write their letters for them?—There are many writers in the lines who do it for them.

F-1102. *The Chairman*: You have told us in effect that the coolies who work here for any length of time sufficiently long to be sure whether they are or are not suited to the work, have an opportunity in one way or another of getting back to their country if they feel that they are not likely to become settlers here?—Yes.

F-1103. Would you, as an experienced tea planter, have any objection to having that the general rule, namely, that after three years, say, there should be the right of repatriation at the Company's expense to anybody who really felt themselves unsuited or unhappy, or for any reason desired to return home. That would surely at one stroke remove all the lingering prejudices there are, and lead to a largely increased flow of recruits to Assam. Would there be any objection to that from the planters' point of view?—There would be none at all. In fact it is being passed by our agency that people can be repatriated after three years. That goes down in our question sheets every year to the recruiting offices.

F-1104. That a coolie may be repatriated at his own request?—Yes, after three years.

F-1105. That is so in your case, is it?—Yes. The three years are not yet up since that was started. It was started about two years ago.

F-1106. Have you a copy of your question sheet?—From what we hear in the recruiting districts there undoubtedly seems to be that prejudice against coming here, partly due to the distance, and partly due to the unhealthy conditions in days gone by before sanitation was taken up by the tea gardens. I want to ask you, as a practical man, whether you do not think that what I have suggested would be to the mutual advantage of every body?—I think that a freer movement of labour would be to the advantage of Assam.

F-1107. And if that were done successfully for a period of years you might attain the ideal, which I think every body holds, of having a complete and free flow of labour in future, which appears to be impossible at present?—Yes, that would be so.

F-1108. It is recommended in many cases, and I think by your Association, that there should be established another system of recruiting, parallel with the *Sardar* system, not doing away at one fell stroke with the *Sardar* system, but allowing authorised and responsible agents in the recruiting districts to recruit, under the same condition that their licenses may be cancelled by the Provincial Government in case of any misconduct, and that they may be under the same general rules as the *Sardars* are. Do you not think that that would enable you gradually to diminish and perhaps to dispense with the expense of the *Sardar* system?—I think it would.

F-1109. Would you have any objection to that system being brought into operation and, for a time, running parallel with the *Sardar* system, and, in the course of a few years, possibly, taking the place of the *Sardar* system?—No.

F-1110. *Mr. Cliff*: What is the arrangement about the Rs. 12 bonus which the workers have just told us about?—We call it an attendance bonus. It is given at the expiry of 12 months.

F-1111. Every 12 months?—Yes.

F-1112. What is the standard of attendance?—There is no standard. It is given at the expiry of the 12 months.

F-1113. *The Chairman*: What is the standard of regularity?—It is just given at the end of the year.

F-1114. *Mr. Cliff*: Does every worker get Rs. 12?—Yes. We could give it. If a man is a bad worker we can say "We are not going to give you the bonus."

F-1115. Do you give every worker a bonus of Rs. 12?—Every worker who applies for it. He has to come up and apply for it. The workers come to the office and write their names in the books, and it is paid to them on a certain day every month.

F-1116. Were there a number of workers last year who did not get the bonus?—Yes.

F-1117. Why did they not get it?—Because they did not apply for it. They did not want it.

F-1118. Why did they not apply for it?—I do not know.

F-1119. Do they know about it?—Of course they do.

F-1120. Surely any body who knows that there are Rs. 12 waiting in the office for him will make an application?—Whether they think they are under an obligation or not I cannot say.

F-1121. *The Chairman*: That is the point?—They are under no obligation. They are told that it does not make any difference whether they take the bonus or not. Some of them prefer not to take it.

F-1122. *Mr. Cliff*: Are they left with the idea that if they take a bonus at the end of 12 months they are here for another year?—That idea has come forward from the old days when they were under an actual agreement. They probably still have that idea at the back of their minds.

F-1123. We have been told that many of the workers do not realise that the *girmi* has gone?—A certain number suppose that it has not gone. They feel they are under some obligation. On the other hand, take another garden which I superintend. There the workers get a monthly bonus of Re. 1 if they work 20 days a month. Some of them will not take the trouble to come up and take the bonus at the end of the month.

F-1124. Is it paid without application?—They have to come up for it.

F-1125. Do you not pay it at the same time as you pay the wages?—If they claim it.

F-1126. Surely they come up for their wages?—There is a special night for paying this bonus. If they do not want it it is no use shoving it upon them.

F-1127. It appears to me that they cannot know about it?—They do.

F-1128. I have never met any human being who has not been "after the carrot." I cannot understand it. Can you help us about it?—I cannot. I only heard of it the other day as a matter of fact.

F-1129. Have your people ever been told by the management that the agreement system has gone?—No. They know it quite well themselves.

F-1130. *Mr. Clow*: Is it not incredible that if the men realize that there is no shadow of an obligation or anything else attached to the twelve rupees that they will not take it?—I should take it.

F-1131. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Can you give us any reason why a man who knows that he is entitled either to a bonus of Re. 1 a month, or to Rs. 12 at the end of the year, should not come up and take it?—I cannot give you any reason. Probably if you sent a man to the lines with the bonus and told them it was *bakshis* they would still shake their heads and say they did not want it.

F-1132. That shows that there still survives amongst the workers the idea that the taking of the bonus means that they are under obligation to serve another year?—There is no reason why there should be. It has been explained to them often enough.

F-1133. You just said that you have never told them anything about it?—They have been told that they are under no obligation. In the olden days there was an agreement which they were obliged to sign, but since 1913 that agreement has been done away with and they have never been given papers to sign and therefore they know now that it is not an agreement but a bonus.

F-1134. That does not explain why a man does not come up for his Rs. 12?—They were under an obligation at one time, and they are still of the opinion that the bonus puts them under an obligation.

F-1135. *Mr. Clow*: Do you not take a thumb impression as a receipt?—There is a thumb impression taken at the dépôt for the money.

F-1136. *Mr. Cliff*: Do they give a thumb receipt for their wages?—No.

F-1137. Just for the bonus?—Yes.

F-1138. *Miss Power*: You do not take a thumb impression for the wages?—No.

F-1139. Why do you take a thumb impression for the bonus?—I cannot say.

Miss Power: Surely the implication to the worker of a thumb impression for the bonus is that he is committing himself to another year's work on receipt of the bonus.

Col. Garbett: May I give you an instance. My bearer came to me for more pay. He was already rather highly paid and I said to him: "I give you quite enough. Have you taken your bonus this year?" He replied that he had not. I said "Why not? The Company is prepared to give you Rs. 12. You will not take it. Why ask me for more money?" He said "I do not want to take it." I said "It does not make any difference to you. There is no obligation." I made him thoroughly understand that. His answer was "I get big pay from you. I am a big man and I am not going to lower myself by taking this bonus."

But that argument does not apply to a coolie, does it?—I think it does apply to some. It may apply to people who are well off, and those are mostly the people who do not get agreements.

F-1140. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Can you give us the percentage of the workers who have not drawn the monthly bonus due to them and also the total number who have not drawn the yearly bonus when that was due to them, say, for the last three years?—We could get that figure.

F-1141. *Mr. Cliff*: Is there much *ticca* work on this estate?—It is practically all *ticca* work in a way. The coolie gets into the habit of earning so much and when he has earned that amount he goes home.

F-1142. How do you pay them?—We pay them on the unit system. A unit is one anna.

F-1143. A man who earns 4 annas does four units and the man who earns 8 annas does eight units?—Yes.

F-1144. Whether the man understood the question or not I do not know, but when I asked him he said he earned Rs. 3 a week, which is 8 annas a day?—We try to get new coolies to earn 8 annas, but they do not all do it.

F-1145. Is that including *ticca*?—Yes.

Mr. Cliff: This man said he had not been asked to do any *ticca*.

F-1146. *Mr. Clow*: Do you have any *faltu* labour?—No.

F-1147. *Mr. Cliff*: Would it be possible for you to give us an abstract of the number of days worked, with the earnings?—For 1929 it worked out at 20 days each per month.

F-1148. Have you got the earnings?—No, but it would not take very long to get them. (See Q. No. F-1152.)

F-1149. *The Chairman*: What is the explanation of that low number of days per month?—They just take a rest.

F-1150. They could work 26 days a month?—Yes. They could work 6 days a week every week.

F-1151. Therefore they take those 6 days off in addition to Sundays?—Yes, on the average.

F-1152. Are the *Sardars* who are away recruiting included in that figure?—Yes. I have now the figures for the earnings. Taking October, the average pay for the men was Rs. 10-9-10; for the women Rs. 10-3-6; for the boys Rs. 7-6-7; and for the girls Rs. 7-1-10. For September the figures are:—men Rs. 9-8-6; women Rs. 9-8-9; boys Rs. 6-7-11, and girls Rs. 5-9-2.

F-1153. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Can you give us for the last 12 months the total population on the garden, the total working force on the garden, and the hours of work, and payment?—The hours of work are what they make themselves, with the exception of plucking time. In plucking time they are rung in at 4 o'clock and they go out whenever they like. I now have the figures about the agreement. There are under agreement 1,200 men and 1,153 women. There are 308 men and 324 women not under contract.

F-1154. *Mr. Cliff*: What do the phrases “under agreement” and “not under contract” mean?—“Under contract” is what we call attendance bonus.

F-1155. Can you show to us the form on which they put their thumb print?—It is just a plain foolscap book.

F-1156. *Miss Power*: Have you a school on the tea garden?—Not on this garden. We have two schools on the other division.

F-1157. How many children are there on this garden?—About 800.

F-1158. Is there any school available for the children of this garden?—Yes. There is a Government School just down the road and another one within a short distance.

F-1159. How many of the children come to those schools?—I do not know.

F-1160. Does the Management encourage the parents to send their children to those schools?—No; there are schools on the other division to which they are encouraged to go. Not many take advantage of them. We have had schools here, and have put in teachers and fitted up the schools, but they have never been attended sufficiently well to give the management much encouragement.

F-1161. *Col. Russell*: What was your birth rate last year?—The birth rate was 45.04 per thousand and the death rate was 22.12 per thousand. That is for this garden.

F-1162. What are the chief diseases you suffer from in this garden?—Nothing in particular—a little fever.

F-1163. There is not very much malaria here?—Not a great deal.

F-1164. Do you insist on your Baboos registering every birth and death?—Yes.

F-1165. Do you check them up?—Yes. The register is signed by me every month.

F-1166. Are you satisfied that every birth and death is recorded?—Yes, the Doctor sees to that.

F-1167. Have you a hospital and beds in it?—Yes.

F-1168. Do the workers make use of the dispensary?—Yes.

F-1169. They have no objection to going to hospital?—No, they are well looked after in that respect.

F-1170. Can you give the number of children under one year of age who died last year?—You will get that from the statistics which we send in monthly to the Government.

F-1171. *The Chairman*: What proportion of your people here have *khet* land. I gather that you have not enough for all of them?—We have not as much as we would like to, but we have quite a lot. 482 *Purras* (that is an acre and a quarter to a *Purra*) of *khet* land are cultivated by 1,042 tenants.

Mr. Cliff: Is any new land available?—No. It has all been opened up.
(The witness withdrew.)

ASSAM.

Fiftieth Meeting.

JORHAT.

Thursday, the 9th January 1930.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (*Chairman*).

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| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | DIWAN CHAMAN LALL, M.L.A. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. | LT.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S. (<i>Medical Assessor</i>). |
| MR. JOHN CLIFF. | |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA. . . | . . . |
| LT.-COL. H. C. GARRETT, Superintendent, Kanjikoah Budla Beta Tea Co., Ltd. | Assistant Commissioners. |
| MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN . . | . . <i>Lady Assessor</i> . |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. . . | . . . |
| MR. A. DIBBIN . . | . . . Joint Secretaries. |

**Mr. L. N. SARMA, Manager of the Rowriah Tea Estate
(near Jorhat).**

F-1172. *The Chairman*: For how long have you been the Manager of this Estate?—For the last 7 years.

F-1173. What is the total population on the Estate?—The total number of souls is 372; the labourers are 234.

F-1174. That is workers: men, women and children?—Yes.

F-1175. Will you tell us about your recruiting during the last two years, how many *sardars* you sent and how many recruits you got?—In the season 1927-28 I sent 10 *sardars* who brought me 21 souls. In the season 1928-29 I sent out 13 *sardars* who brought me 22 souls.

F-1176. Do any of your *sardars* not come back again?—Yes.

F-1177. What is your loss in *sardars* who do not come back again?—Four *sardars* did not return last year and they are not likely to return. I lose the man's service and the expense that is incurred in bringing him here as a labourer, and also the expense in sending him again as a *sardar*.

F-1178. They have become *sardars* because they wanted to get back to their own country at your expense?—That might be their idea, but it was not known to me when they were sent out.

F-1179. Could you employ more labourers on your estate if you could get them?—Yes.

F-1180. How many more could you employ?—I could employ up to 300 labourers in the garden for the present planted area.

F-1181. As compared with the 234 that you have?—Yes.

F-1182. That is to say you could do with another 65 labourers if you could get them?—Yes

F-1183. Have you ever found men going as *sardars* and then getting re-enlisted for other gardens, making a profession of being *sardars*?—Yes, I have.

F-1184. To what extent?—I had a case of that kind in the season 1923-24; a man came originally to the Hautley Tea Garden as a labourer and then went out as a recruiting *sardar*; then from that district he came to this garden as a labourer and from here he returned as a recruiting *sardar*. Somehow in the recruiting dépôt he was caught; a Hautley *sardar* there recognized him and got him back to Hautley. Cases of that kind occur; in that case he was detected; there may be other cases which are not detected.

F-1185. Do you find the system of recruiting by *sardars* very expensive?—Yes, I think it is expensive; in the year in which we got 21 souls we had 10 *sardars* and the expenses per head were Rs. 115-15-3; we had 13 *sardars* in the year we got 22 souls and the expenses were Rs. 120-4-5 per head. That is the expense per soul; the average may include infants of 3 or 4 years, or even a mere birth.

F-1186. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Did you recruit them through the Indian Tea Association?—Yes.

F-1187. You are a member of the Association?—Yes.

F-1188. *The Chairman*: Have you considered any improved form of recruiting in addition to the *sardar* system? Your Association appears to be in favour of allowing an additional form of recruiting apart from the *sardars*; you have not considered that personally?—I have not considered it personally, but what I feel is that we ought to be in closer touch with the recruiting districts than we are now. We send our *sardars* to the dépôt and they go to villages 7 or 8 days' journey from the dépôt; if a *sardar* in whom I may be particularly interested is not coming back, I cannot get the man in charge of the dépôt to make enquiries about him; They sometimes send a peon but that does not help very much.

F-1189. Then you would be in favour of having responsible recruiting agents in the recruiting areas who were not *sardars*?—Yes, if that is possible I am in favour of that.

F-1190. If a system of that sort were established do you think it would save you the present very high expense of sending out *sardars* many of whom do not bring back recruits at all?—The result of such a system would have to be seen, but I hope it would improve matters.

F-1191. Of your average labour force you lose a certain number who go as *sardars* and do not return?—Yes. The number of *sardars* not returned during the last five seasons was 11.

F-1192. What is the average loss per year which you need to make up, apart from deaths, to maintain your labour force; do you lose 30 or 40 in the year?—In my case the figure is not so large; it is 18 or 20.

F-1193. You lose 18 or 20 on the average in a year?—Yes.

F-1194. And you do not know where they have gone?—In many cases we do not know; when they go to neighbouring gardens of course we get them returned if we know. This applies to absconders and not to *sardars* not returned from district.

F-1195. But still you have a certain loss of 18 or 20 a year unaccounted for?—Yes, we have always losses like that.

F-1196. I suppose those are people who do not find the life on the tea garden to their liking and they go off somewhere?—Generally we find the people who do not like to settle on the tea garden go out; they are the kind of people who come from the dépôt as single men. Those who come with families do not generally abscond from the garden after they once come.

F-1197. We found in the recruiting districts that people still think that Assam is a very long way away and there is a distinct reluctance to come to Assam because they think if they once get here they are lost. Now if they had the right of going home if they did not find the conditions suitable, do you not think that would substantially increase your flow of recruits and bring a better quality of recruit?—My idea is that coolies who really want to labour for their living do not like to leave Assam when once they come. I cannot give you a definite reply to your question. Coolies when they come here do not generally consider that the life in their own country is better than here.

F-1198. Once they have got over the first stages of settling in what to them is a new country, you find them happy?—Yes, that is my opinion; they generally find the conditions prevailing here in Assam better than the conditions in their own country.

F-1199. If once you could overcome the reluctance to make the plunge you would get a freer flow of recruits, and any losses that you might have then of people who did not find the life to their liking would be unimportant?—But I think it is better to have coolies willing to settle on the garden; they are more useful than those who are coming and going.

F-1200. *Mr. Cliff*: If you send a *sardar* down into a given district and he approaches a man to come to Assam, that man's friends say to him: "Do not go to Assam because if you do we shall lose you for ever"; and so the Chairman suggests: supposing the *sardar* made it known to the man that if he did not like it, after a given period he would have his fare to come back to his home, that that was a legal right he would have, then his friends would not be able to say to him: "You will be lost for ever." Do you think that would be a help in recruiting labour?—I have not considered that yet, but I do not think it would help very much. This is a small concern and my recruiting is mostly in connection with Sambalpur; the *sardars* do misrepresent things there. Personally I am quite prepared to offer that repatriation as a term and sometimes I do repatriate the coolies, though, of course, that is not general. For instance, there was a woman who came from Madras; I learned that the *sardar* bringing her made certain misrepresentations to her. She was not satisfied with the conditions here and was always complaining. I sent her with an escort back to her home. Personally I am quite prepared to offer coolies repatriation.

F-1201. *The Chairman*: And would you think that three years would be a reasonable period in which they might have an opportunity of becoming used to the new life here and in which they could make up their minds whether they would become settlers here or not?—I think it should not be less than three years.

F-1202. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: You say the *sardars* in some cases misrepresent things; apart from the particular case you have mentioned, are there any other cases which you have noticed of misrepresentation?—No. In that case the only evidence I had of misrepresentation on the part of the *sardar* was the statement of the woman herself.

F-1203. Do you find that the new recruits who come in usually come in from the same villages as those from which your old recruits have come?—The *sardars* generally bring their own people from their own villages.

F-1204. What are the average earnings of your recruited workers here?—We have to make bi-annual returns as to that. In my case in September 1929 the average earnings were: men Rs. 12-11 per month, women Rs. 10-7-7, children Rs. 9-10-2, and in March Rs. 10-11-3, Rs. 6-6-6 and Rs. 4-9-6, respectively. Labourers are also supplied with rice at concessional rates, and loss suffered by estate on this account in 1928 and 1929 was Rs. 1,183 and Rs. 670, respectively.

F-1205. At the end of a year, after they have paid for their rice, clothing, etc., is there much of a margin left to enable them if they wish to leave here and get back to their homes at their own expense?—I think there are coolies who have some funds after meeting their expenses.

F-1206. *The Chairman*: In addition to those earnings have they paddy land?—Yes, we give them paddy land, charging them the same rent as we have to pay to Government. In some cases we give them land free; for instance, we let them have the low land intervening between the tea lands; they have to clean that land up before they can cultivate it. If they did not clean up that land we should have to clean it up, and so we give them those lands free.

F-1207. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Out of your 234 workers how many have paddy land of their own?—If they are willing they can have it; I have sufficient land to give them, but at present I do not think there are more than 20 or 15 houses with land.

F-1208. Would a system of labour exchanges spread out in the recruiting districts be of assistance to you, in preference to the present system of sending out *sardars* every time you want to recruit? The labour exchanges would be constantly in touch with the labour supply. If you had a series of offices in your recruiting districts and you could communicate your requirements with those offices, would that assist you more than the present system?

The Chairman: If you have not considered it, just say so?—I have not considered it.

F-1209. *Mr. Clow*: Under the *girmit* a bonus of Rs. 12 is given?—Yes.

F-1210. Do all your coolies take it, or do some not take it?—Generally all of them take it; when they come for the bonus we pay it. Nobody refuses to take it.

F-1211. Do you take a receipt from them at the time of taking it?—No. Formerly we had a proper stamped form.

F-1212. I mean simply in the register?—Now we do not keep any register. A register is meant to be kept, and is in preparation.

F-1213. Do you not take an acknowledgment from them, —their thumb impression?—There is no use in it and we do not take it.

F-1214. The coolies inform me that when you give them what they call the *girmit*, you take a thumb impression in a book?—The practice is now discontinued because we found there was no use in it; we used to take their impression although we know it is not a binding document.

F-1215. If you knew it was not really effective, why did you take it?—It is only from the 1st January of this year that we have abolished taking their thumb impression on the form.

F-1216. Then why did you continue it after the Act had ceased and it had no binding effect?—To tell you frankly, when anything new is introduced among the coolies it is very difficult to get them accustomed to it; that is the only reason. We had no idea of bringing a case against them. They would consider it a hardship if the amount were not paid.

F-1217. But if you had given them the amount without taking their thumb impression, they would not have considered it a hardship; why did you take the thumb impression for this payment?—Because that was the practice; they are used to doing that, and for us it serves as a voucher for the payment.

F-1218. *The Chairman*: I understand you ceased taking the thumb impression a week ago?—Yes. I have explained to the coolies that it has no force. We have never paid that Rs. 12 as a *girmit*; it has always been paid as a bonus, even when the *girmit* was in force.

F-1219. What do you call the Rs. 12; do you call it an attendance bonus?—It was called *girmit* bonus. We are now trying to forget it.

F-1220. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You say you have stopped since the 1st January?—Yes, taking the thumb impression on the form.

F-1221. Have you paid any bonuses since the 1st January?—No.

F-1222. During last year, 1929, how many of your workers who were due to take the bonus of Rs. 12, did not take it?—Without counting I cannot say.

F-1223. Is the bonus given to encourage them to work in the ensuing year or is it given for good work in the past year?—No, it is merely continuing the practice.

F-1224. What does the coolie think when he gets the Rs. 12; does he think it is for next year or what?—He thinks he is being paid bonus in advance.

F-1225. *The Chairman*: What was the reason that led you to decide to discontinue this from the 1st January?—Because the matters which are stated in the old form are no longer in force.

F-1226. But they have not been in force for a number of years; did you continue to use this old form?—Yes; sometimes the thumb impression is taken but the form is not filled in.

F-1227. Then you think your coolies quite understand that the acceptance of this Rs. 12 does not imply any obligation on their part?—Yes, I think they understand that; I have personally explained it to most of them.

F-1228. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You are a member of the Indian Tea Association?—Yes.

F-1229. Did the Association ever issue any circular to its members saying that Act XIII had been abolished and that you should not get agreements signed any longer?—Yes, I have read the circular, only lately.

F-1230. *Mr. Clow*: Do you pay annas 4 to a man for the *hazira* and annas 4 for the *ticca*?—Yes.

F-1231. At what rate do you pay the adult men for hoeing?—Generally it is Rs. 7 a month wages and there are extra earnings besides that. For that Rs. 7 there is a fixed task in the morning; they have to do 10 *nals* in the particular hoeing you saw in the morning, except Sundays, in order to earn that Rs. 7 a month; those who turn out in the afternoon will have another easier task for which they will receive annas 4.

F-1232. Does the *sardar* get any commission on what they do?—Yes.

F-1233. What does he get?—In my case for hoeing he will get annas 2 for every rupee's worth of work.

F-1234. Does he get any pay in addition?—Yes, one gets Rs. 10 and the other Rs. 11.

F-1235. How does the *sardar* get the men to come out and work?—They generally come out at their own time; we have not much trouble about that. Of course, we have to look after some lazy people who do not like to come out.

F-1236. How do you induce them to come out?—Some of our men go there and get them out.

F-1237. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How many souls have you working?—234, which includes absentees who are not always at work.

F-1238. How many *sardars* have you now working?—I have 5 *sardars*.

F-1239. *The Chairman*: Does the *sardar* get a fixed pay?—Yes.

F-1240. In addition to the annas 2 per rupee of work done?—Yes.

F-1241. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What do you pay your 5 *sardars*; that is to say, the fixed pay and then the commission?—Two get Rs. 11 each and another 3 get Rs. 10 each. The tea house *sardar* gets Rs. 16 a month, with Rs. 10 to 15 as *bakshish* at the end of the season. The *sardars*, like other labourers, are also given what is now called working bonus of Rs. 12.

F-1242. You said the *sardars* get in addition commission; what would their commission amount to?—In one week in November two *sardars* got Rs. 5-13 between them.

F-1243. That would make nearly Rs. 3 per week per *sardar*?—Yes.

F-1244. So that he would get Rs. 12 a month in addition to his Rs. 11?—Yes; he may be making more or less.

F-1245. Then he would be getting about Rs. 23 a month?—In the plucking season they get much more.

F-1246. The coolie gets annas 4 for hoeing in the morning and annas 4 in the afternoon, which is annas 8, and he works about 26 days a month?—Yes.

F-1247. So that the coolie can earn Rs. 13 a month if he likes to work?—Yes, he can get even more. He can earn annas 8 a day in addition to his *hazira* earnings in the morning but we generally find them only doing annas 4 or annas 6 worth of work for their extra earnings, except in plucking when all people can and do earn much more than annas 8 as extra.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. F. McALLISTER, General Manager, The Assam Oil Company, Limited, Digboi.

F-1248. *The Chairman*: For the purpose of record may I ask you how long you have been the General Manager of the Assam Oil Company at Digboi?—Four years.

F-1249. We are interested in particular about your labour force and your methods of recruitment. You tell us in your memorandum that your company now employs about 8,000 men, 300 women and 200 boys, and that "applicants for work apply to the Labour Bureau." Will you tell us shortly as to whether you have an ample supply of labour; how you obtain this large force of 8,000 men, 300 women and 200 boys; do you send out to recruit, or do they come to you in all the numbers that you require?—Some years ago we had to recruit, but we stopped actual recruiting, except in isolated cases, about three years ago, and the labour generally is now plentiful. There is no occasion for recruiting whatsoever except in very isolated cases, and we have established a labour bureau where applicants for work are registered and in rotation are offered work when vacancies occur.

F-1250. Take these large numbers of people who come to you, 2,450 from Bengal and 1,200 from United Provinces. Do those come of their own accord to apply for work?—Yes.

F-1251. You send out no *sardars* or recruiters?—No.

Can you tell the Commission to what you attribute the fact that you are able to obtain this labour, some of it from considerable distance, without any method of *sardars*?—One must only conclude that the conditions as regards pay and otherwise are such as to induce the people to come from those distances; I can offer no other explanation.

F-1252. Do these people pay their own travelling expenses to come to you?—They do.

F-1253. From what part of Bengal do they come?—Mostly from Chittagong; as a matter of fact, most of these 2,450 men are Chittagonians.

F-1254. And the 1,200 that come from the United Provinces, what type of men are those?—They are mostly from Gorakhpur.

F-1255. May I take it that you have really more men applying for work than you have work for them?—At the present time, yes.

F-1256. What do they do in the meantime?—As far as we know, nothing. They hang around waiting for jobs. Actually, I am not particularly interested in people for whom we cannot find employment. We have no organization to handle such men. They are permitted, of course, to stay in the lines if their friends are willing to put them up.

F-1257. You say that a good deal of your labour is migrant labour and that they return to their villages. Do they return to their country for two months in the year and then come back to you again; is it a regular practice?—Yes, it is a regular practice.

F-1258. Do you regard that as absenteeism or as recognized leave?—We treat it as recognized leave provided they do not stay away for more than six weeks, which is the regulation period; if they stay away for a longer period they are generally scored off the books, and they re-apply for employment in the ordinary course.

F-1259. That six weeks is without pay, I presume?—Yes.

F-1260. But you have a considerable proportion who come back year after year taking that six weeks' recognized leave?—That is so.

F-1261. With regard to the conditions of pay which attract this ample supply of labour, I see that you say in your memorandum that "the average coolie wage is 14 annas a day. Semi-skilled and skilled workers obtain up to Rs. 3-8 a day according to their work and ability." It seems rather remarkable that 14 annas a day should enable a coolie to come and work and return at his own expense for six weeks to his country and then come back again to you, and to go through that process regularly?—Of course, I am speaking more or less generally. Statistics are not of such accuracy as would enable me to say quite categorically that they return to their country. What we possibly should have said is that they leave our employment. Where they go has been no particular concern of mine. They leave the service, they may do paddy work or any other sort of work, or may take rest in surrounding villages. I am afraid I am not in a position to say that they actually return to their country.

F-1262. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Will that apply to the United Provinces men also?—Yes; I am speaking of the labour force generally. I do not think we say definitely that the same people go every year and return every year. Actually that is not so. We may get some people staying for two years, but there is always a substantial percentage of people moving around.

F-1263. *The Chairman*: Your general practice is to allow six weeks' recognized leave during the year?—I would not put it that way either. If it is recognized leave in the sense that their names are not cut off the books the answer is in the affirmative.

F-1264. If they stay longer than six weeks, they are removed from the books, and if they come back again they are treated as newcomers?—That is precisely the position.

F-1265. Do you house them free?—Yes.

F-1266. With regard to education, will you tell us what you do for them in that respect?—I am afraid not a great deal. We have a girls' school and a boys' school, which up to five or six years ago was by no means popular. The school is of middle English grade, partially, although by no means generously, supported by Government. For many years there were only a few of the clerical staff's children who attended this school. However, in recent years there has been a more

organized drive to interest the labour force generally, and one class in particular, in education. Last year we extended the school building by approximately 100 per cent., and the pupils to-day are in the neighbourhood of 100 boys and possibly 70 girls.

F-1267. Does that mean that you and your staff have interested yourselves in endeavouring to get the children to go to school?—Yes. The General Manager of the Company or the Assistant General Manager is the president of the school committee and takes a personal interest in the school as much as time will permit.

F-1098. Would it not be a good thing, and make for the contentment of the Labour Superintendent who receives complaints from the men and investigates grievances. How long have you employed that officer?—Six years.

F-1269. Have you found that he is able to do much in the way of understanding the people and helping them in their troubles?—Yes. As a matter of fact, we have now two whole-time European Labour Superintendents employed on welfare work.

F-1270. Is their sole work to listen to the peoples' grievances?—One man's sole work is that. This Labour Bureau has been established for various purposes. All engagements, for instance, are made by the Labour Bureau.

F-1271. These two labour superintendents are part of the Labour Bureau?—Yes.

F-1272. They engage the labour for you, in the first instance?—Yes; or if there are no appointments vacant they will register applicants. In the event of any man being dismissed from any particular department, he has the right of direct entry to the Labour Superintendent for investigation of his grievances should he happen to have any or should he think he has any, and this is the idea in having the second man in the Labour Bureau. He is rather the labour man than the company's man; one might put it roughly that he is in the service of the company on behalf of the labour.

F-1273. He is really appointed by you as an advocate of the interests of the labour?—That describes it precisely.

F-1274. Does your company consider that this money is well spent?—I think so. With reference to your previous question to illustrate one item which would result to the benefit of the labourer, I might mention that we have on the staff, roughly speaking, 100 Europeans, and some of them, of course, are very junior in service; some of them hasty and some of them with an incomplete knowledge of the language. We have had the feeling that in many cases the labour—I am not speaking only of the coolies, I am speaking of the labour as a whole—has really had just grounds for complaint. But inasmuch as we had no organization to investigate those complaints, nor had the management time enough to enquire into them, we thought the time had come to increase the establishment to such an extent as would enable a man to give more or less all his time to the labour. Actually this latter part of the organization has only been functioning for some two months.

F-1275. To whom do your Labour Superintendents report?—Direct to me.

F-1276. So that I take it the purpose is to make a direct link between the rank and file of the workers and yourself?—One might describe it that way. Personally I hope that references to myself will be few and far between.

F-1277. I meant to the real director of the business?—I might add perhaps that the Senior Labour Superintendent has a certain amount of authority. Unless it is a particularly serious case which might result in friction between himself and the department dismissing the labourer, he shall have power to reinstate the labourer without reference to me.

F-1278. Then obviously you need a man of very high type to be able to fill a post of that kind?—That is so. The officer we have, I think, had four or five years' experience of labour conditions elsewhere.

F-1279. The real point is, I think, that when there is a large labour force amounting to 8,500 men, women and boys, you think it is well worth while to have a special officer whose whole-time is engaged in dealing with the personnel?—I think I might safely say yes.

F-1280. And that both you and your company are satisfied that that leads to the efficiency and the contentment of your labour force?—That is our belief.

F-1281. Does the Labour Superintendent also take an interest in the houses and in the education of the labour?—He does.

F-1282. Is that particularly in his province?—Yes.

F-1283. He attends then to any difficulties that may be in the houses?—He actually allocates the houses; the houses, as completed, are handed over to him. Even before the new Labour Superintendent was appointed, the housing was largely under the direction of the Labour Superintendent, but there was a certain amount of come and go with the general office, that is, with myself or one of my assistants in the main office. But since we have a better type of Labour Superintendent, a more educated man and a man of better social standing, his responsibilities have been increased, or rather the responsibilities of the post have been increased. As soon as a house is completed, the civil engineering department advises direct the labour department, sending me only a copy, that such and such a house is ready for occupation, and then the Labour Superintendent deals with the matter; he releases the congestion in other quarters or allocates as occasion demands. He also interests himself in games. He is a member of the school committee.

F-1284. Have you a provident fund?—Yes.

F-1285. Does he take a lead in that?—No; he has no more to do with the provident fund than any other official of the company has.

F-1286. Does the provident fund extend to the manual workers, or is it confined to the office?—It extends to all. The only limiting factor is that one should earn a minimum salary of Rs. 30 a month, so that although many of the artisans are members of the provident fund there are very few of the manual workers.

F-1287. Does the senior Labour Superintendent report periodically to you as the General Manager; does he make a formal report once a month or once in two months?—He actually reports quarterly, but we are more or less in constant communication on major matters; I do not worry about the routine work; that is his job. If there is any trouble, or any serious case for investigation, or any difficulties about housing, we consult.

F-1288. What I was wondering was if there was any formal report that he made, whether it might be useful to us as showing in some detail the kind of work which such a labour superintendent is occupied in doing?—There is an annual report in the course of preparation.

F-1289. Would it be possible for you to let us have a copy of it when it is prepared?—I think it is quite possible; I do not see any objection myself.

F-1290. *Mr. Cliff:* What was your approximate number of dismissals last year?—I do not know how that arises. Was that in the questionnaire?

It arises out of your remarks about the difference in human character between different departmental chiefs and the fact that your company has thought fit to appoint a man who should represent labour. How many dismissals did you have last year?—Dismissals are not considerable. As I have no books here, I cannot give the exact figures.

F-1291. Have you any idea of the number of cases of dismissals that have been preferred in the two months that this man has been operating?—That, again, I cannot tell you; probably very few, inasmuch as the two months that the new man has been operating have been employed in the reorganization of the department.

F-1292. In the case of the work that is to be done, with regard to the lodging of an appeal, the appeal lies with the chief labour officer?—Yes.

F-1293. Does it mean that the departmental chief is present during the hearing of an appeal?—The idea is that the labourer shall not be unduly embarrassed by the presence of his discharging official. The labour office is an open door, and I think the departmental official would merely come into the discussion if he discovered that this man was reinstated; he then might make a little trouble.

F-1294. It really means in effect that the chief labour officer can overrule the decision of a departmental chief?—That is correct; if, in his opinion, the dismissal stands on rocky foundations he can overrule the departmental man. The question, as I said before, in the event of serious trouble, would then come direct to me.

F-1295. Referring to housing, with regard to the expenditure that has to be incurred or has been incurred, is that dealt direct by the chief labour officer, or is that the function of the General Manager?—I might mention what would happen now in a case of this kind, and what has in fact already happened. The

Labour Superintendent after completing his rounds of the lines reports that the place is over-crowded; he carries his report a bit further and tells us that to overcome the difficulty he requires so many houses of this or that type. We have got standard plans of our quarters, and if anyone is interested in seeing the plan I can leave behind the drawing I have.

(*Col. Russell*: Yes, please.)

(The plan was handed in.)

The Witness: We have also put in the cost of various units. We then proceed to ask our London office for sanction, not for all his requirements because things change very rapidly. We may have 8,000 people to-day while we may have only 6,000 people to-morrow; I mean by that, two years hence the position of production may necessitate a reduction in establishment. To be quite frank, we are all hoping so. So that we merely cover so much as we can spend within a reasonable time. Let me illustrate that: We have now indicated to the Directors that on the basis of the present labour establishment we require something like Rs. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs to cover the building programme. Without a very heavy increase in the number of contractors and without bricks you cannot build houses, the supply of good bricks in Assam, or at any rate in our part, is very limited; even the *kucha* bricks in such colossal quantities as we use them are very hard to get. So that I feel that the most we can hope to spend during 1930 would come to Rs. 2 lakhs, and I have asked for sanction of this amount. Whether I shall get it or not I do not know, but I think we will.

F-1296. Thirty per cent. of your workers are not housed. Is that margin left with a deliberate purpose, or is that due to your not being able to get as far as you would like to get?—The growth of the company has been greater than our ability to provide for everyone. In principle and in the light of our experience, we would prefer not only for the sake of control but for stability to have our force housed internally.

F-1297. Before leaving the question of labour force, how many years have passed since you had no difficulty in obtaining labour?—Roughly I should think four to five years. It has been improving steadily all the time, for what cause I cannot say. Whether it is due to better provision for houses, water, sanitation, medical attendance or otherwise, or whether the rates of pay are better in Assam in industrial undertakings than they are elsewhere, I am not in a position to say. But the fact remains that whereas, say, ten years ago it was extremely difficult to get labour, we find to-day that it is very easy. Another point which may contribute to some extent is that our difficulties, say five or six years ago, were generally with the lower classes of labour, that is with men handling material and such like. We have now a considerable amount of mechanical transport and mechanical appliances generally, so that our demand for the lower class of labour is diminishing in direct relation to the increase of mechanical appliances.

F-1298. Have you any idea of the approximate number of applicants you have on your register that might be called a live register?—To-day, I think, we probably have 700.

F-1299. Is there any alternative employment in the district?—Industrially as against agriculturally the only alternative employment is with the Assam Railway and Trading Company, who really control the D. S. R. and the coal mines at Margherita. That is the only outlet, beyond the tea gardens, requiring a fitter here or a fitter there; there is a very limited need for labour of this type.

F-1300. With regard to shift workers is there no provision for rest at all?—In some departments, I am afraid not, apart from time for food on the job.

F-1301. Could you tell us approximately the number of men who are under the Rs. 30 limit; or could you say the number who draw above Rs. 30?—I can get it for you. Again I prefer not to commit myself.

F-1302. Do you advance money?—We will advance, but the demand for advance is very limited.

F-1303. Is it an advance against wages?—Yes.

F-1304. *Mr. Ahmed*: Do you give any holidays with pay to your workers?—The labour that we were now discussing is entitled to four days leave with pay in a year.

F-1305. If you grant them one month's leave in a year, as in the case of Government servants, they can go to their villages once a year and come back to you?—It is quite conceivable, but they do that now.

F-1306. When they come back to you, you treat them as new-comers?—That is correct.

F-1307. And therefore there is no continuity in their service and they cannot get any pension or gratuity?—The question of pension does not arise.

F-1308. Why?—Because we do not give any pension.

F-1309. Would it not be advisable to give pension to your workers?—We have a provident fund scheme, which admittedly does not cover people under Rs. 30 a month; the reason being that before one can receive the benefits of the provident fund he must have continuous service. I think that applies pretty well all the world over. In the case of the lower grades who leave service to suit their convenience, either for cultivation or otherwise, without any concern whether or not they are thereby inconveniencing the company, I think they are unfit to participate in such a scheme. If they have continuity of service we are quite prepared favourably to consider the lowering of the present minimum, but until such time as we can get that continuity we cannot but keep up to the present limit.

F-1310. *Miss Power*: I take it that the bulk of the people who come up are men who come without their families?—Now the tendency is for more married people to come. A few years ago there were very few people who brought their families.

F-1311. When you say married people, do you mean to say people who bring their families with them?—Yes. It has become more common. Actually, our provision under the new scheme, covers, I think, 30 per cent. married accommodation.

F-1312. Do you expect the number of coolies who settle down permanently to increase?—We are certainly hoping so, and a good deal of our expenditure is designed with that object in view.

F-1313. You said that you had 700 men on your labour books waiting for work. When you are selecting further people from these 700 you would, I take it, select as far as possible those who have brought their families, or who want to become permanently settled?—I should definitely say not at the present time; we would prefer single men at the present time inasmuch as we have not enough accommodation for men with families. Our quarters are definitely over-crowded, and there is no point in taking any more married people.

F-1314. If you had more quarters, I take it, you would reverse that policy in order to get a stable population?—Assuming always that money can be found. You are now examining the representative of a company which has not paid any dividend for the last nine years.

F-1315. *Mr. Clow*: To what class of your establishment does the Factories Act apply?—To the workshops only.

F-1316. Covering about what proportion of the labour?—The average for the last 11 months is 389.

F-1317. The rest of the establishment is subject to no regulation under any Act?—That is correct. By the way, the figure of 389 that I gave is for the workshops on the fields. There are men in the refinery, but I cannot give you their exact number at the moment; but probably it may be a couple of hundreds.

F-1318. Do you employ any women or children?—I think that has been answered. The numbers are negligible.

F-1319. Do you think there should be labour regulations applying to oil establishments, apart from the workshops?—I do not see any particular objection would be raised, but I do not know if there would be any great advantage. We are applying the Workmen's Compensation Act, whether by law we are responsible or not; for instance, if we lose a man we pay compensation to his family.

F-1320. That has been applied by notification to the more dangerous occupations?—Yes, that is so. But inasmuch as the Factory Act, to my mind, is largely a safety measure to ensure the safety of employees it stands to reason that, without the application of any Act since we pay compensation, we shall take all due precaution for the protection of the labour force.

F-1321. What is your difficulty in giving a weekly holiday to all your employees?—The work in certain departments must proceed. It is essentially continuous, and you cannot stop the process.

F-1322. Continuous work can be carried on, and is carried on, in many factories although a weekly holiday is given?—Any man may have a weekly holiday if he wishes it, but he will not be paid for it.

F-1323. But should not he be compelled to take it?—That would necessitate a large increase in one's labour force to cover that.

F-1324. You had a strike last year designed to secure Sunday holiday by some people?—I believe so; I was at Home then.

F-1325. Should it be taken that what you have told us applies solely to the Digboi oil fields or to all the branches of your company working in this province?—It applies to those in upper Assam.

F-1326. Not to those in the Surma Valley?—I have no connection with the Surma Valley.

F-1327. Can you tell us what the general rate of daily wage for unskilled labour in your vicinity is?—I can only make a guess. On paddy fields I might put it down at 12 annas. I have not sufficient knowledge of tea gardens to tell what is paid there.

F-1328. In your labour force are there men who were previously employed on tea gardens?—Yes.

F-1329. Are there many?—The representatives of tea would probably tell you more about that than I can.

F-1330. The mere fact that you know or suspect that a man has come from a tea garden would not prevent you from employing him?—I think it would prevent us. I think I must say a little more about that. At one time, as I have already explained, there was definitely a shortage of labour. Naturally, when there is a shortage of labour, anything on two legs counts for something. If labour came along, I do not think we put them through a very drastic cross-examination or asked too closely their antecedents. If we had reason to believe that they were connected with our next door neighbours we would not take them on. The position now really does not arise because we do not want them; we have no need for them. Mechanical methods have very largely eliminated the need for coolie labour. Our labour may really be divided under four heads: skilled labour, semi-skilled labour, labour of a type that we think may be potentially skilled or semi-skilled labour; there is a selection of the best applicants and we have, fourthly, the definitely unskilled labour which is becoming a smaller percentage of the whole. So that if our friends from the tea gardens came along now I think we would probably give them an examination that we did not give them five years ago.

F-1331. *The Chairman*: But you did build up part of your present labour force from tea garden recruited labour?—It is so said, but it is neither admitted nor believed to be substantially true.

F-1332. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do the figures of 8,000 men, 300 women and 200 boys include your contractors' labour?—No.

F-1333. How much contractor labour do you employ over and above those figures?—That varies very considerably according to the demand. At the present time we may have in the neighbourhood of 2,000 contractor labour. For instance, we have to do a large amount of earth cutting. Last cold weather we had 1,100 *Nunias* to do earth work alone; this year we have something like 150.

Who brought up these *Nunias*?—They came up themselves; we can get *Nunias* by the thousands.

F-1334. They cannot afford to come up by themselves by millions?—Contractors bring them up; all the earth work is under contract.

F-1335. When you want a contractor to excavate earth, or whatever it is, do you give the contractor an advance?—No. We would give him an advance if he wanted it.

F-1336. Your contractors who employ *Nunias* to the extent of 2,000 to 4,000 hands recruit their own labour?—That is so.

F-1337. Presumably they go down and attract the labour and pay all the expenses of these *Nunias*?—Yes.

F-1338. Can you tell us how many of your workers are skilled, semi-skilled, potentially skilled and unskilled?—No, I am afraid I cannot; I should require notice in order to answer that question. I have some figures here which I can leave behind if you are interested in them. These figures give the average number of the men employed and the full wages paid from January to November 1929. They are sub-divided not into classes but into departments. Roughly I think you might divide unskilled and skilled in the proportions of 75 and 25 per cent.; that figure is extremely rough and I give it with considerable reserve.

F-1339. Will you give us some further particulars later?—Yes, if you desire it

F-1340. How many of these workers are in the workshops, the refinery and the out-field?—We have two sets of shops, the field shops and the refinery shops. In the field shops we have 389 employed as against the outside engineering, which consists of fitters running round the field and doing repairs on the spot. Engaged in that work there are 939 on the average this year, and there are 2,031 workers on the average employed on drilling operations. The refinery workers are lumped together in the statement I have handed in and not split up into detail; there are 2,480 souls working in the whole refinery.

F-1341. They come under the Factories Act?—Subject to verification, I think only a section of the refinery comes under the Factories Act. That is a point I am not clear about. I think it is only the workshops and the tin factory that come under the Factories Act. I do not think the refinery is a shop; it is a distillation process. I estimate the number of men in the workshops to be about 200.

F-1342. You say that the coolie labour is migratory; frequently staying not more than six months. What percentage of the labour will be turning over?—We have no statistics unfortunately.

F-1343. Will you make a guess at it?—I think these guesses are distinctly dangerous.

F-1344. I agree with you. Will you send us your figures?—We have not got the statistics; we have got a labour bureau, but I do not say it is perfect.

F-1345. You definitely make the statement that coolie labour is migratory, frequently not staying more than six months?—Yes, and I believe that to be so. We can give you such figures as we have with pleasure.

F-1346. When any labour comes in do you ask them where they come from?—No, I do not think they will be asked where they come from.

F-1347. So that they may have come from Chittagong or anywhere else?—That is what I suggested to the Chairman a short time ago.

F-1348. You speak of your birth-rate being 3·3 per thousand. You say the female population is very small?—There are a great many women around Digboi.

F-1349. How is it that your birth-rate is so small as 3·3 per thousand if you have women in your coolie lines?—We only give the birth-rates for such children as come under our medical inspection—there may be any number of births originating from the employees of the Assam Oil Company of children who are brought into the world in the neighbouring villages.

F-1350. You say you house 70 per cent. of your labour?—Yes.

F-1351. And I think you said they brought up their wives?—Yes.

F-1352. If the birth-rate is only 3·3 per thousand there cannot be any women at all in your compounds?—Of the 2,450 people largely from Chittagong the percentage of women is practically negligible.

F-1353. Is your Labour Superintendent a highly paid officer?—He is paid Rs. 1,000 a month, with allowances.

F-1354. With regard to sickness insurance, you say full pay is given whilst in hospital and half pay whilst under treatment as out patients. Have you any figures which show what percentage of your 8,000 employees come into hospital and draw full pay and what percentage get half pay?—I have no doubt we have those records.

F-1355. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: What were the causes of the last strike you had?—I think the major cause was the question of Sunday work.

F-1356. Did the workers present a list of their demands or grievances?—I do not think there was any actual list of their grievances; at all events I have not seen one. I know their main grievance was not so much the Sunday work because the people had worked on Sunday for many years, but the amount of the overtime paid for Sunday work.

F-1357. What was the result of the strike?—The result was that the point was conceded; or the major demand, which was for double pay for Sunday work was conceded and the people came back to work.

F-1358. Has an attempt ever been made to form a trade union by the workers?—Not by the workers, not to my knowledge; I have never been approached by any workers with regard to a trade union.

F-1359. You have mentioned workmen's compensation; how many accidents occurred last year?—I have no doubt we have statistics; I am afraid I have not them with me, but you can take them with pleasure.

F-1360. Can we also have a statement as to the amount paid in each case?—Certainly.

F-1361. Do you pay workmen's compensation in cases of coolies employed by contractors?—No, not always. We pay under cover of the Act. The Act in certain circumstances saddles not the contractor but the contractor's employer with the obligations of the Act. In those cases we pay. In other cases the contractor pays.

F-1362. Have you any figures as to the amounts paid to the contractor or the cases in which a contractor has paid anything?—I think it is unlikely, and I think perhaps the number is so small as to be completely negligible. The accidents do not occur in that particular branch.

F-1363. Are the children in your school mostly children of the clerks?—No, not now; it is becoming more general now. *Mistris*, fitters and the lower orders are now sending their children to school, though to a very limited extent.

F-1364. During the last few years have you had any other strikes on your works?—Yes, we had a little trouble in 1928, on much the same lines as last year's strike; it was again on the question of Sunday working, and its relation to pay. The arrangements with regard to overtime were strictly in accordance with the law which provided for time and a quarter. Work in this particular branch is possibly more arduous and certainly more dirty than the rest of the work. I am speaking now of the actual winning of oil in the fields. So far as money was concerned the strike was of minor importance. My own feeling was that time and a quarter was hardly a fair deal, so we conceded it without very much discussion beyond insisting upon the workers going back before we altered the terms to time and a half.

F-1365. You agree with me that it would be a good idea if there were a workers' organization; would you be averse to a union being set up by the workers?—If it is properly controlled and set up by our own workers there are no objections that I can see.

F-1366. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you charge rent for your houses?—No.
(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. D. S. WITHERS, Manager of Dessai and Parbattia Tea Company.

F-1367. *The Chairman*: I think you have had a very long experience in the management of tea gardens?—I have been in charge since 1908 as Manager. I have been in Tea since 1897.

F-1368. You have had 32 years' experience on the tea gardens?—Yes.

F-1369. Will you tell us the vital statistics of your gardens: the population, the number of souls, number of workers, figures as to births and deaths, and so on?—The total population is: male 1,032, female 882, children, that is to say, minors 1,750, making a total of 3,664. Our birth-rate per thousand per annum is 46.9; the death-rate is 31.3; the infantile mortality per thousand is 168.6; still born 12. The working force consists of: men 1,439, women 1,107, children 605, making a total of 3,151.

F-1370. What is the area?—1,413 acres under tea.

F-1371. What is the amount of other land?—1,798.90 acres.

F-1372. Have you got the area of paddy land and the number of labourers who hold paddy land?—476 acres held by 564 families.

F-1373. Have you enough paddy land for those workers who are willing to work it?—No, I have not enough. I have enough for roughly 60 per cent. of the labour.

F-1374. Presumably you give that land to those who have been longest with you?—Yes, the others have to wait their turn unless there is a man who has been thrifty, saved money and has a pair of buffaloes or bullocks; naturally one is inclined to help him as much as possible.

F-1375. We have been struck with the remarkable number of children about your estate?—In view of the recruiting difficulties in the past we wondered whether we could not raise our own labour from the children. As far back as 1912 I started feeding the children and looking after them. Then I found that when there was a family of two children and a third child was born that child was sometimes neglected and died. Therefore in 1925 I started paying a man 30 per cent. higher wages if he had three non-working children. That increased the number very much; in 1926 there were 52 families with three non-working children, while at the present day there are 91; that is to say, that in three years the families with three under-working age children have increased from 52 to 91.

F-1376. Is that because there has been a lower death-rate among the children?—Yes. If by the death of one of his children a man is going to lose 30 per cent. of his earnable wage, he will bring a sick child to hospital immediately; ordinarily he might hide the child when it was ill and do various ceremonies in his own way to save the child's life, in which event it would probably die. Now rather than lose the child a man will take the child to hospital or call in the doctor.

F-1377. Have you the figures for infantile mortality for the last few years?—Yes, but the mortality figures ten years ago were not as reliable as they are now.

F-1378. Just now you gave us the infantile mortality as being 168 per thousand. Is that less than it was a few years ago?—I cannot tell you without looking it up, but I can get that figure.

F-1379. Your system of paying 30 per cent. bonus where there are three non-working children has had the effect of improving the care of the children by the parents?—Undoubtedly. It is not a bonus. All my coolies are paid monthly, and the rate of wages of a man who has three non-working children will be Rs. 9 a month instead of Rs. 7.

F-1380. When you say that 30 per cent. more wages are paid, does that apply to the man and the woman if they are both earning?—No, only the man's wages; but in the event of a man dying if the widow is left with three children she gets it.

F-1381. How do you think recruiting might be improved?—I know the difficulties we have from what would appear to be a very clumsy arrangement at present. The difficulties are those of getting labour to come from other districts, their long standing ingrained dislike of the country through rumours and officials, antagonism. That is especially so in the Chota Nagpur area. About two years ago an Assistant Manager was in the Ranchi district, and was warned by the District Magistrate that if he was seen speaking to his *sardar* on the road he would be prosecuted under Emigration Act VI.

F-1382. That would be under that curious definition of assisting in recruiting?—Yes. In the Chaibassa district the son of one of the big headmen made a run-away match with a girl-servant; he came to me. I knew at once who it was; I wrote to his father and to the Deputy Commissioner telling him the circumstances of this man coming to me. I said I was looking after him and was quite sure that after things had cooled down he would come back again and I would send him back. A warrant then arrived at the garden and the man was arrested and taken away at a moment's notice. The woman was left here; a child was born and the woman and the child were left on my hands. That was at a time when I was recruiting a good deal of labour from Singbhum, and there was a talk about the possibility of being arrested and taken back. I think the officials in the Chaibassa and Ranchi districts are antagonistic to recruiting and the ordinary coolies know it; that is one of the drawbacks.

F-1383. Is that because the existence of a new opportunity to labour tends to raise the local rate of wages?—I do not think so. I think that antagonistic feeling has been in existence for a good many years; I think it is a remnant of the old idea that if people come to Assam they never go back again.

F-1384. In recruiting districts when we asked the reason for the reluctance to go to Assam to the tea gardens we were told about the distance and the idea that a person would be lost for ever if he went to such a distant part as Assam. Does your opinion confirm the idea that that perjudice still lingers?—Yes, it still lingers. Even in trying to get *misris*, artisans, skilled labour, washermen, and such like people from Calcutta, they will tell you the same—that they have a fear of coming to Assam.

F-1385. Do you think if there was a system which involved free repatriation in case the coolies found themselves unhappy here at the end of a reasonable term, let us say three years, and if that became generally known in all the recruiting districts that if for any reason they desired to return to their country it would be easy for them to do so, do you think that might remove this lingering prejudice against coming to Assam?—Yes, I am inclined to think it would; but there would have to be a safeguard; after his three years if the labourer wished to stay he would be allowed to stay, and then that arrangement for repatriation at the end of three years would be finished. That is to say, if a labourer stayed after that period and subsequently wished to go back to his country he would have to go back at his own expense.

F-1386. That was the suggestion: that three years was a reasonable time in which a man and his family might become acclimatized and happy having got over their first difficulties in the change of country and climate; and if at the end of that time he really wanted to go back to his country he would be free to do so at the Company's expense?—There is the possibility of outside influences trying to stampede a batch of coolies from a garden if it was known that they might be repatriated at the Company's expense after a period of three years.

F-1387. Some reasonable safeguards will require to be worked out, but the suggestion was that it would once and for all remove the feeling in the recruiting areas that to go to Assam was never to have a chance of getting back again?—Yes, I think it would remove that feeling.

F-1388. Have you any experience of this short-term recruitment for 6, 9 and 12 months?—I believe I had the first batch of short-term coolies that ever started in Assam: it occurred I think in 1912 when a brick contractor, who was burning bricks, was unable to meet his liabilities, absconded and left all his Ranchi coolies there with nothing to eat. They came to me and I said they could work with me until they got money sufficient to take them back to their own country. They subsequently came back to me the next year and worked for six months on the same terms.

F-1389. But the figures show us that last year there was a considerable recruitment, some 9,000 souls from the Ranchi district on this short-term agreement which involved repatriation at the end of the term. Have you had any of those?—No. I should like to see the free influx of labour coming in as freely as possible.

F-1390. Do you not think some intermediate step is required before the recruiting districts will be prepared to do without any control of recruitment and absolutely free movement of labour?—Undoubtedly to begin with I think there would be trouble. But there would be no trouble as soon as labour got up here and gardens were filled; there would be a rush and probably a few abuses would creep in at first.

F-1391. Supposing the right of repatriation at the end of three years if dissatisfied were the general rule, it might be expected very considerably to increase the number of people willing to come to Assam?—Yes.

F-1392. So much so that you might possibly have more people anxious to come than you were able to take?—Yes.

F-1393. That would enable you more or less to choose your workers and to obtain a completely contented, settled and happy population on the tea gardens?—Yes.

F-1394. *Miss Power*: Could you subsequently let us have statistics as to the number of *sardars* you have sent down in recent years?—In 1928 I sent down 62 *sardars*; 26 did not return; I received 57 souls at a cost per head of Rs. 154.

F-1395. *Mr. Clow*: Does that cost per head include the loss on the *sardars* who did not return?—Yes, everything.

F-1396. *The Chairman*: Have you any knowledge of the reason why of those who went down that number did not return?—I cannot say. No doubt a lot of single men come up here with the intention of not staying. They come up just to look round and get a certain amount of advance money. Then they go back with the avowed object of getting their families, but they have no real intention of getting their families.

F-1397. Do you allow a man to go as a *sardar* who has not worked as much as 12 months here?—No, not as a rule. The man works here and we send him down to fetch up his family.

F-1398. Have you any experience of the man who makes a practice of making a profit out of being a *sardar* and going from one garden to another?—No.

F-1399. What is your opinion about wages; do you think the present pay is sufficient for the standard of living of the coolies?—I think the present rate of pay is sufficient for their present standard of living. If higher wages were given to them now they would simply be wasted. It would either go in drink or debauches; it would not be put to any proper purpose. It would probably weaken the man as a labourer and he would not be such a good bread-winner as he would be if he had not that extra money to use in a wrong way.

F-1400. Have your men an opportunity of getting a good deal more than they do actually earn?—Very much more, yes.

F-1401. How much more could they earn?—For instance, I have men working on pruning, which takes them four hours and the average monthly wage is Rs. 9. I have also a batch of men who should be on that work, but they prefer to hoe for 2½ hours during the day on a monthly wage of Rs. 7. They will not do the pruning because it would take them four hours, although their wages would be increased by Rs. 2 a month.

F-1402. Then what is your suggestion with regard to the raising of the standard of living?—I think they have to be educated up to it right from the very bottom, especially the young people. I think that is the only chance. It is going to be very hard to educate the older people who have been imported into Assam as fathers and mothers; it is going to be very hard to change their mode and standard of living. But I think the younger generation might be taught. I do not think they will be taught very much through schools unless it is possible to get masters who can teach not only reading and writing but can tell stories. The coolie is very susceptible to picking up things through tales. I am perfectly certain a great deal of work could be done in improving the standard of living and working by means of the cinema. But the cinema is practically impossible owing to the cost of importation of films. One can buy films at home for 1½d. a foot, but by the time they get here they cost about 8 annas a foot with the duty.

F-1403. Have you taken any steps by means of stores to encourage the people to purchase little luxuries?—We ran a co-operative store. We started in 1917, and it was doing very well until 1921. That year I went Home, and the non-co-operation movement started. A man was left in charge of the co-operative stores and had strict orders to give nothing out on credit. He joined the non-co-operation movement and gave out everything on credit. When I came back there was no stock and no money and the store had to go into liquidation. The difficulty is to get leaders to run a movement of this kind; we have not got the men and we cannot get school masters in the district.

F-1404. Will you tell us a little about your experiment in education on the tea gardens?—I think our first school was set up in 1910; that was a small school in the lines. The boys were very pleased about it and learned quite a lot, as also did the adults. I make it a point that my headmen, *sardars*, *chowkidars* should be people who can read and write sufficiently to write down names; I always give preference to a man who has been taught to read and write.

F-1405. How many children have you going to school on your estate now?—In this division I think there are 49 on the school books with regular attendance.

F-1406. How many of your 1,750 children would you consider to be of school-going age?—We are feeding the infants daily and the number is 486; if you deduct 486 infants from the figure of 1,760 that would leave about 1,300 children of school age. The total on the books is 44; they are of the garden coolie class. There is also a small class of nine for outside people who want their children taught. In the other division there are about 40 on the books and the attendance is not very good just now.

F-1407. *Miss Power*: It is about 100 altogether?—Yes; on all the gardens of the Company.

F-1408. *The Chairman*: Are the 1,300 of whom you have spoken all potential school children?—They should be. The 1,760 are all what we call children; that is to say, they are not being paid an adult wage. They are under 15.

F-1409. But many of them are earning something?—Yes, a lot of those are earning.

F-1410. Is the reluctance to come to school due to the fact that the children can earn wages?—I do not think so, because practically all the boys at school are workers. At each busy season I give them three months' summer holidays, two months' when I want them and another month when the children are planting on their parents' land. During that time we shut the school down entirely.

F-1411. Do you think parents appreciate your efforts in the direction of education?—They have not expressed any opinion and I do not know.

F-1412. Would the possibility of education for the children of coolies when they come here be a factor in the recruiting districts?—I think it probably would be in some districts; it might attract labour.

F-1413. But your own figures show that up to now the parents cannot be said to be very keen on education for their children?—I do not think the parents really trouble about it. It rests with the children.

F-1414. Do you and your staff take any steps to encourage the education of the children?—Not more than providing a school master and a school room and occasional inspections. Sometimes we run picture shows for them; we have a cinema machine here.

F-1415. There is no persuasion or pressure by parents to get their children to go to school?—No, never.

F-1416. We have been interested in what has been called the bonus, i.e., the Rs. 12 which appears to be generally given at the end of a year's service. Is that the custom here?—Yes.

F-1417. Do the coolies regard that as a reward for steady work during the past year or as having something to do with the coming year?—The coming year.

F-1418. Do your coolies all take the Rs. 12?—Practically all; occasionally some will not take it; they do not want to.

F-1419. Why do they not want to?—We had the Penal Act VI and an Act in which a three years' agreement was laid down and the coolie received a bonus of Rs. 12 a year on guaranteeing to work so many days in each year. That was done away with. Then we had the Local Act XIII, which I think was called the Artisans Act. Then that was done away with, and the actual agreement was abolished. But we kept on giving them their Rs. 12 a year as bonus.

F-1420. I suppose they would have resented the withdrawal of the Rs. 12?—Yes; we could not take that away from them; for one thing, they look forward to it in order to buy cattle, and things of that kind, at the end of each year.

F-1421. But you think that in some cases the old idea still lingers?—Yes; I am quite sure that must be so.

F-1422. It is still regarded as some form of a bond?—Yes.

F-1423. Do you take a thumb print receipt for it?—No.

F-1424. Since when did you abolish that?—As soon as the Act was done away with and we were told not to do it. I cannot remember which year it was. I have not taken a thumb impression on an agreement for 18 years. I used to put a cross against the name.

F-1425. *Col. Garbett*: Who told you not to carry on as you did under the old Act XIII?—I have an idea that a circular came round at the time from the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association.

F-1426. *The Chairman*: Apparently a few coolies do not take the Rs. 12 and remain under that exploded idea. Do you take any steps to point out to them that it implies no obligation whatsoever?—Yes one does, but the trouble is one does not always know when it happens. When a man knows his time is up and he is due for this money he goes up to the office and asks for a little slip with the date on which he got his bonus last year; that is given to him and he takes it to one of my assistants who pays him the money. If a man does not come and ask for it I have no record to enable me to know that he has not asked for it. Last week a man and his wife came to me and asked to be given a chit as he had not taken his money for two years. There was no record in the book for the last two years of his having had that money.

I asked him why he had not taken it and he answered that he did not wish to take it but he wanted it now. I pointed out to him that he had lost Rs. 24 and his wife had lost Rs. 16, but it did not seem to strike him that he had lost anything at all. They are very peculiar in that way. I think undoubtedly it is regarded as a relic of the obligation by most of them.

F-1427. Have you anything to say to the Commission on the question of public and private roads on the tea gardens?—While travelling from England I met Mr. Joshi; he was very strong on that point and said that until all garden roads and paths to the tea estates were open to the public it would be impossible for an outside man, either for his own purpose or in order to start a trade union, to get in and teach the coolies. It is my opinion that the present labour that we are dealing with here is not sufficiently advanced for trade unions. Trade unions would lead to trouble, and for that reason I say that we ought to keep our roads and exercise control over the people that come in. At present there is no guarantee that anybody coming in is really *bona fide* and has the welfare of labour at heart. So many of these people are merely furthering their own interests and do not mind what happens to labour.

F-1428. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: What sort of trouble do you contemplate?—Ignorant coolies not understanding if they are told things and not getting hold of the right idea, and then possibly doing things ignorantly which would cause dislocation of work and probably hardship to themselves and others.

F-1429. The idea being that if a trade union organizer comes and forms a trade union, the result of which was a strike, would you be against it?—Anybody at present could cause a strike in the garden if he chose to without wishing to organize the workers. I do not think the workers are sufficiently advanced and are too ignorant at present to be organized in that way. Until they become more educated I think it would be very dangerous.

F-1430. You remember the trouble you had in 1921. You definitely put that down to the situation which existed generally in the country. Supposing the situation in the country became again like that. Do you not think a good sound trade union in the tea gardens would be a bulwark against trouble of that kind?—It might be if you could educate the people to know exactly what the position was.

F-1431. How are they to be educated unless you allow trade union organizers to come in and educate them?—I am afraid they would want to go too rapidly. You have to go very slowly; it takes years and years to do anything with these coolies. I fancy that the people who are keen on trade unionism would try to go too rapidly, and there would be a thin veneer of this so-called trade unionism which would not sink in.

F-1432. A beginning has to be made?—Yes.

F-1433. How do you wish to make a beginning?—I think education should come first.

F-1434. Do you want to wait another 15 or 20 years?—I do not say that, but it is going to take a long time; I do not think they are prepared for trade unionism at present.

F-1435. When you say they are not prepared you mean the tea garden managers are not prepared for it?—No; I am speaking entirely of the coolie; the coolie is not prepared for it.

F-1436. The only objection you have is that there might be trouble?—Undoubtedly.

F-1437. That is all?—Yes; the coolie is not prepared for it; he is too ignorant.

F-1438. If there is fear of trouble that means that the manager is not prepared to face it?—No, the coolie is not in a condition to receive and accept the teaching of trade unionism.

F-1439. Has it been tried?—Not that I know of on a tea garden.

F-1440. *Mr. Cliff*: I want to follow up that point. You say, as the Government says, that what is necessary is to increase the needs of the garden worker; that is the essential thing. There is a conflict of interests between the garden manager and the demand for an increased outlook and increased needs of the coolie. The garden manager says that it will cost more. Many managers might take a short-sighted view and say "we must not bear that cost, and an improved outlook means trouble for us; it means a question of discontent."

Can you help us with regard to this? You spelt out as to what you meant by education, and I am inclined to agree with you. What influence is there to play on the garden worker other than that of the manager in a task which is almost superhuman, if the garden manager has the power to prohibit persons coming into the lines? I feel there must be a beginning. The garden manager says "I must reserve the right to prohibit an educationist from coming into my lines?"—I think the best way to get over the difficulty is to have some organization which would take up educational work for a group of gardens. We run now a doctors' association, and we have a doctor who attends to a group of gardens. If there was some such organization which would take up education and welfare work of the tea garden labourers, it would be a good thing. I do not think you can expect the manager of a tea garden to do that as well as his own duties of which he has many. I think you will agree that the labourers require a certain amount of education before a trade union on proper lines can be formed.

F-1441. There is one deficiency, I think, I notice and that is a lack of public-spirited people to try to take upon this task. Do I understand you to say that you would not oppose a public health and welfare board for tea garden workers?—No, I should not.

F-1442. Do you think it would be an advantageous thing?—What I should like to see myself is a board in each district consisting of two or three of the old planters of the district and the Deputy Commissioner of the district in which all matters connected with labour can be discussed and decided, and their decision should be acted upon by all the planters of that district.

F-1443. Instead of the present system of recruitment which has very largely broken down, would you prefer more regulation in Assam itself, designed for the welfare of the garden worker, rather than any elaborate form of recruiting?—Yes, I should. I think it is a waste of money to have an elaborate form of recruitment. That money might be spent in Assam for educational purposes and generally on amusements of coolies to their advantage.

F-1444. I want to ask you a question with regard to the class of persons whose friends and relatives say: "If you go to Assam you are lost for ever" and with regard to the class of person who is dissatisfied with his condition on the garden. Assuming you had a board of that character, might the grounds of repatriation be more extensive than the present Act? Would you agree that the labourer might be free to apply to that board, and if there is sufficient ground he can be repatriated?—Are you referring to the new scheme?

F-1445. Yes. Might that be one of the functions of the public welfare board?—No; I think it should be independent of that.

F-1446. Would it be your view that there might be a machinery which could deal with repatriation?—If the rule regarding repatriation after three years comes into force, I think that could be done irrespective of any board.

F-1447. I am not thinking at the moment about repatriation at the end of a three-year period. A person may come and find after a period of, say, 18 months that the life is totally unsuitable; there might be other grounds during the passing of the time with regard to home circumstances which he cannot put down in a schedule. Should not that person have a right to go to some board and submit an application for repatriation?—Yes.

F-1448. Do you think that would help at all?—I do not think it would. I was not thinking of a board for repatriation; I was thinking of a board for each district which would discuss matters connected with labour, like wages, welfare work, education and things of that sort.

F-1449. What is the definition of child workers? I saw cases where parents were taking children who were not employed. Will you tell us what is the earliest age that a child is employed direct by the garden?—I think it is from 10 to 12. It is hard to tell. I generally go by the physique of the child.

F-1450. Having regard to the number of children that are employed, do you think that the planters would oppose compulsory education?—I do not think they would, provided it is throughout the province. I think it would not be fair to have compulsory education for children on tea gardens while not having it for boys in villages adjoining the tea gardens.

F-1451. If it were general?—Yes; but I think that in that case it should be up to Government to provide the necessary teachers.

F-1452. *Sir Alexander Murray*: We have had it suggested to us that it is hardly fair to take the combined earnings of a man, his wife and children on the tea gardens and that we should treat the tea gardens in the same way as industrial towns where you expect the wage that is paid to the man to be sufficient to provide for the family. What have you to say about that?—I think it is going against their custom which is in existence for hundreds of years. Take, for instance, the aborigines of Chota Nagpur; the women do the hardest work.

F-1453. You feel there is no real force in the argument, at least in so far as the tea gardens are concerned, that only the man should be the wage-earner and not his family?—No.

F-1454. Can you tell me how many acres of land you give for cultivation to your labourers?—It all depends on the strength of the family. I have some very old big families who have a much bigger area than the ordinary people.

F-1455. What is the maximum you have given?—Three acres.

F-1456. Do you give advances to your coolies to any extent?—I give advances for the purchase of cattle and things like that, and occasionally for marriages.

F-1457. Can you say how many of your workers have taken advances at the present moment?—There are not very many.

F-1458. How soon do they repay?—The advances I give are nearly all big advances; Rs. 10 or 20 and sometimes Rs. 40 for the purchase of a buffalo. They pay at the rate of one rupee or Rs. 2 a month, or pay it up in a lump sum. About ten men form into a group and each puts in Rs. 2 or 4 a month into the pool. They draw lots as to who should draw the money in turn. The total may come up to Rs. 15 or Rs. 20 or sometimes Rs. 40. Suppose a man's turn comes in the month of February and he wants money in January for purchasing a cow or a buffalo he comes to me and asks me whether I will advance him money which he will repay from the chit amount. I then make enquiries to verify his statement and advance money. In such cases no cut from the pay is made because the advance is repaid in a lump sum.

F-1459. Is this system peculiar to your gardens, or to the district?—I do not know.

F-1460. How many will there be in the pool?—It varies; generally 6 or 8.

F-1461. How many such pools will there be on your estate?—A great many. I cannot give the exact number.

F-1462. Mr. Cliff while putting a question made a remark that the present system of recruitment has broken down. Do you agree with his statement?—No. A very big number of labour is still coming to Assam.

F-1463. It is not meeting all the requirements of the tea gardens by any means?—No.

F-1464. Can you assess the reason for it? Is it because the recruitment system is bad or that the demand for tea gardens has increased during recent years?—I am not in a position to answer that.

F-1465. You admit that the tea garden industry is expanding?—Of course, it is expanding.

F-1466. *Divan Chaman Lall*: Is the sight that we saw this afternoon the usual sight to be met with on the tea gardens, men with very little clothing and children practically naked?—Yes. You see them like that in the country too.

F-1467. What is your experience of the type of food that these workers eat?—What caste are you referring to?

F-1468. Take the Mundas, for instance?—He is a good feeder; he eats well; he eats a lot of meat.

F-1469. I suppose he buys the meat in the bazaar?—Yes.

F-1470. He takes rice, vegetables and various other pulses, I suppose?—Yes.

F-1471. I think you said that he gets a wage of Rs. 9 a month?—That is the actual monthly wage, excluding his earnings on extra work. For the month of September, the average earning of a man was Rs. 11-2-4 and a woman Rs. 12-1-10. The feeding of children that we do relieves him of a good deal of household expenses. That feeding alone costs us nearly Rs. 10,000 per annum.

F-1472. Let me take a man whose wife is not working. He earns Rs. 11 a month. Would not most of that go in feeding himself and his wife?—In that case I think he would not be able to save more than Rs. 3.

F-1473. He has to purchase rice, ghee, fire-wood?—He does not purchase fire-wood.

F-1474. I saw people selling fire-wood?—They must have stolen that.

F-1475. I think I can say that the cost of feeding may come to 6 annas a day?—The feeding of children costs me Rs. 1-11-6 per head per month; that is about an anna a day.

F-1476. That you would not call a sufficient meal for a worker doing manual work on the field?—No.

F-1477. I take it therefore that generally the amount of money that he earns, if his wife is not earning, will be spent on food?—On his clothes and on his drink.

F-1478. I am coming to that. If the condition of men, women and children is what we saw to-day, do you not think that more wages would mean more comfort for them, better clothes and more clothes?—No; they never change.

F-1479. Suppose they have a surplus?—They will utilize it in drinking.

F-1480. That is a complaint we have heard all over India that more wages would mean more drinking. Let me put that on one side; it is a mere hypothesis. Suppose there was a margin left for him and he bought better clothes, ate better food, would he not be a better worker?—It certainly requires good food to be a good worker. I think our workers have sufficient food and do look well.

F-1481. To tell you plainly I was horrified at their look. You would agree that it is not a good sight to see both men and women workers with torn clothes going about and children with no clothes at all?—You should see what clothes they wear on Sundays or on festival days. In ordinary days they put on their common dress, keeping their good clothes for festive occasions.

F-1482. You said that more wages would not benefit them because they would spend that in drink or in debauch. Your fear is just that and no other?—No.

F-1483. Otherwise you would be willing to pay them more?—If their standard of living could be raised and a desire to earn more money could be brought about, it would be good for themselves and also for the industry.

F-1484. What would you consider a decent and adequate living wage if you were to raise their wages?—At present they have an adequate wage.

F-1485. Suppose you were to give them a wage which would mean a surplus which they could invest in clothes, in good food, etc., etc. What amount would you put it at?—The present food is particularly good.

F-1486. The wage that they get at the present moment is consumed in food which they have to purchase. What I am suggesting is this: Suppose they had a surplus over and above that. What would you put that figure at?—They do get a surplus with which they are able to buy cattle.

F-1487. How many of them are able to buy cattle?—Hundreds.

F-1488. How many of your workers, out of the 3,000 that you have got on your estate, own their own cows or buffaloes?—127 own buffaloes; 714 own bullocks; 274 own cows; 407 own ploughs, and 76 own carts. The rent paid to Company by coolies for rice land for 1929 was Rs. 2,930-15-6.

F-1489. You would agree that if they had more wages and they utilized those wages for purchasing better food and better clothing, it would be an advantage?—Their food is perfectly good now. In the whole of the lines you may find only one or two of a beggar class who will always feed badly; but the majority of them are feeding well.

F-1490. Have you got any statistics to show the amount of money that these workers spend on drink?—No. Generally on pay day many of them go for drink.

F-1491. You have no actual figures?—I have only results.

F-1492. Let me put it this way: If it is shown that the amount of wages that these workers are earning are only just sufficient for them to feed themselves, would you be prepared to give them more wages which would leave them a little margin?—The condition of my people is very good.

F-1493. Let me take you through the figures if you will not agree with me?—I am going by the looks of the people, by the actual property possessed by them. If they can buy goats, cows and buffaloes, surely the wage that is given is not only sufficient for them to feed themselves but it leaves a surplus for them to buy these things.

F-1494. Looks are always deceptive. We should go by the facts. What are the facts? According to your statement, a worker earns Rs. 11 and odd annas a month. Would I be far wrong in saying that if he has got his wife and two children who are not working, his expenditure on food would be about 6 to 7 annas a day?—If a man's children are not working he gets a higher rate of wage.

F-1495. How much higher?—30 per cent. over his monthly wage.

F-1496. That is only where he has three children. Let me go on with my example. Would I be correct in saying that in the case that I cited the actual cost of food would be about 6 to 7 annas a day?—I cannot tell you without going into it. All I know is the result. If they can possess property, the pay must be ample.

F-1497. If it is 6 annas a day it comes to about Rs. 11, which is exactly what you pay?—Yes.

F-1498. That confirms my statement that most of the wages that they are earning go in the purchase of food?—Yes, if your statement is correct, but I have not ascertained from the coolies as to what they are spending daily on food. I doubt very much whether they spend the amount you quoted.

F-1499. Are there any of your tea plantation managers who are Magistrates?—There are.

F-1500. How many of them possess magisterial powers?—I cannot tell you how many. I am one.

F-1501. Considering that an outsider who comes into your gardens, let us say for the purpose of organizing a trade union, can be thrown out because he was trespassing, do you consider it right that you should have magisterial powers?—I cannot use my powers in that case.

F-1502. You can use them on an outsider who comes into your gardens?—No.

F-1503. Suppose I am an undesirable person and I come to your estate?—I have no powers of that sort at all.

F-1504. Do you consider that your workers are free agents?—In what way?

F-1505. Suppose the workers on your tea estate made up their minds to form a trade union and invited me not as a member of the Labour Commission but as a trade union agitator. They are free to invite me, but yet the position is that you could refuse my entry on your tea estate at any time that you choose?—No.

F-1506. Suppose you arrange for a complaint being lodged against me. Do you say that you have no magisterial powers to deal with me?—That is so.

F-1507. Are you quite sure?—Yes.

F-1508. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Are you not a third-class Magistrate?—Yes.

F-1509. And third class Magistrates have no such powers?—No. We are Honorary Magistrates to whom petty cases are referred by the District Magistrate.

F-1510. *Lt.-Col. Garbett*: The cases must come from the District Magistrate?—Yes.

F-1511. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Do you not think it would be advisable to throw out your roads to public?—No, except for their use.

F-1512. Under some new agreements that have been entered into and under some old agreements, the Government have the right to take over your roads?—The condition in the agreements refers to those roads over which Government has already a right.

F-1513. Government have also a right to acquire a road under the Land Acquisition Act?—I cannot tell you.

F-1514. Would it not be better to make the roads public property?—For what purpose?

F-1515. There is an impression in other parts of India that once a garden coolie gets into a tea estate he is more or less a prisoner on the tea estate; that is the impression, is it not?—Yes, in many places.

F-1516. *Lt.-Col. Garbett*: Is it not a fact that that impression is dying out?—Yes, it is dying out.

F-1517. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: In order to create confidence in the minds of the public would it not be better that the roads on the tea estate should be thrown open to the public?—I do not think so.

F-1518. I am asking you this question in connection with trade unions. It has been impossible so far to form a trade union on the tea gardens?—Has anybody tried?

F-1519. Yes, it has been tried, but the fear has always been that it is impossible because of the attitude of the employers who will not permit an outsider to come in and organize a union?—I do not know of any one who tried to organize a trade union. We have had a very unfortunate example of a man who came up here who said he was sent by an organization of which Mr. Joshi was the president. On his word he was given facilities in every way to come forward, to mix with everybody and to find out everything. But what happened? He turned out to be an undesirable man and an impostor. When Mr. Joshi was informed of this he wrote back to say that he regretted very much that the man was sent up. How are we to know that the outsider of whom you are talking will not be of the same class.

F-1520. If you believe in the freedom of the workers on your estate, would it not be better I ask again to have your roads thrown open to the public?—What do you mean by throwing open to the public?

F-1521. To any outsider?—No; I do not think it would be wise. If he were to come for some good object, then we would not object.

F-1522. Who should judge whether it is a good object or not? You yourselves should be the judge?—Yes.

F-1523. For instance, if an outsider of the type that was suggested by Mr. Cliff to you came in and started trade union activities, what guarantee is there that you would not throw him out?—As I have already said, our labour is not sufficiently advanced to form itself into a well organized trade union. Even in Western countries when trade unions were first started in about 1894 the people were not sufficiently educated to receive them. If that was the case there, how can you deal with people here who are mostly ignorant?

F-1524. In any case you are against giving freedom either to your workers or to outsiders, for the workers to get an outsider to organize them?—The workers are perfectly free to go to different places and to do what they like there; we have bazaars and many other places where they can meet and hear anybody who wishes to preach anything they like. But it is a different matter having such people on the garden.

F-1525. You will not permit it on your garden?—Not at present, when the people are so ignorant.

F-1526. When will you permit it?—I cannot say. I will permit it when I consider that the labour has got to that condition which will enable it to receive it for its own advantage.

F-1527. Suppose the workers now consider that it is to their advantage?—If they consider so, I should then say it is a step towards their education.

F-1528. How is that to be discovered unless some outsider comes in?—It should come from the workers themselves; if they feel that they require a union, they will naturally say so.

F-1529. You would be against it then?—No. If my workers came to me and said "we want to organize a co-operative stores or a co-operative bank or anything of that sort" we would only be too glad to give them all possible help.

F-1530. Not for a trade union?—If it came from themselves, without outside influence, yes. But, as I said, they are at present ignorant to receive it.

F-1531. Suppose a movement of the type that started in 1921 in the Surma Valley starts here—I am putting it as an argument—do you not think that it would be in your interest to have a sound trade union on the tea estates as a bulwark against a movement of that kind?—How am I going to be guaranteed that the organizers of this trade union are not going to be the very people who are going to side with the troublemakers?

F-1532. Have you any method by means of which you can get into contact with your workers and examine their grievances and set their grievances right?—Yes. Every Tuesday and Friday afternoon I am in my office from 4 o'clock, and it is open to anybody to come to me and represent whatever he wants; there is no middleman between me and the worker. If he makes any grievance it is always enquired into and set right.

F-1533. Do you not think it would help recruiting if the workers were free to organize themselves and to present their demands generally?—No.

F-1534. *Lt.-Col. Garbett*: Do you not think that it might be a hinderance?—I do not think either way. I hold that they are at present very ignorant.

F-1535. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: I understand that you have a *panchayat* here?—Yes. If any cases concerning the social customs of the workers arise in which I am not quite sure what should be done, I refer them to a *panchayat*.

F-1536. Did you take the initiative in forming that *panchayat*?—I probably did.

F-1537. How can you expect these people then to take the initiative in forming a trade union unless somebody comes and helps them?—As far as the *panchayat* goes, I think, it is a common thing in their own country.

F-1538. And yet you had to take the initiative to form a *panchayat*?—We import people from various villages, and their social customs vary. They have experience of the working of the *panchayats* in their own country, and I thought it would be to their advantage to have a similar system on the tea gardens as well.

F-1539. You said that it would be easy to create a strike on the tea gardens?—Very easy.

F-1540. You have to look at the other side of the picture as well. The trade constituted trade union as a bulwark against any disturbances that might be created by a few workers?—It would be if the trade union is organized really for the benefit of the labour and not for the self-interest of the organizer. I would require a guarantee for that. Generally I have a great distrust for the leaders in India.

F-1541. You have to look at the other side of the picture as well. The trade union leaders are very distrustful of the tea garden managers?—I am afraid I have not met any of them. I have the experience of only Sahoo.

F-1542. You have met Mr. Joshi, have you not?—Yes.

F-1543. If you have met with Mr. Joshi you have met with all the trade union leaders. Would I be far wrong in saying that you resent interference from any outsider who is desirous of helping the coolies?—No. I do not want to be interfered with by people who want to use labour for their own ends.

F-1544. Suppose their ends are that the coolies should get better wages?—If we think that the coolies should get better wages we would pay them, because the whole industry depends on the coolies. But we do not want outsiders to import trouble. Surely the industry is not going to starve its coolies.

F-1545. *Lt.-Col. Garbett*: Is it not true that certain gardens now are already working at a loss, and with the tea market as it is they may probably have to close down?—Yes.

F-1546. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Obviously the position is that you consider what is good for the workers and you will give them no choice to be organized merely because you are afraid of the outsiders?—I do not wish them to be organized against their own interests.

F-1547. There must be something radically wrong, if you are afraid that at any moment a strike can take place or the coolies may walk out as the result of an outsider coming into the gardens?—I am speaking generally. We have seen extraordinary things happening in various parts of India—not in Assam but in other parts of India—through the so-called leaders. Take, for instance, the railway strike; what suffering did it bring about?

F-1548. Which railway strike are you referring to?—To the big strike in the Bengal-Nagpur Railway two years ago.

F-1549. My experience is that strikes do take place because of the legitimate grievances of Indian workers. We are not discussing that problem. The problem we are discussing is this: If you are so nervous of an outsider coming in and the result of his coming in leads to a general strike here, there must be something

radically wrong with the condition of your coolies. There must be certain grievances and I should like to know what those grievances are?—You must be aware that the labour we use is mostly ignorant and is easily led away. What we object to is anybody coming into the garden and telling the labourer "you are really having a very hard time and you should agitate for more wages; why do you put up with your present conditions when you can get more in other places." By doing such things it cannot but create trouble—a position we all want to avoid.

F-1550. *Mr. Clow*: Are there any restrictions on the movement of coolies outside the garden?—You mean from garden to garden?

F-1551. Yes?—We have what is known as labour rules.

F-1552. I am not thinking of the labour rules. Suppose a coolie wants to leave a garden and go to another where he will be taken in, he is perfectly free to do so, is he not?—Yes.

F-1553. Do you know anything about the conditions on the more distant gardens?—No.

F-1554. Suppose this system of repatriation were brought in and a man has served his three years, would you not require some safeguard to ensure that he was not kept on the garden after his three years?—Whatever the organization is, I take it there will be a record showing the date when a coolie came into the garden and when he should be due for repatriation.

F-1555. Suppose a man wanted to stay after three years, do you think it would be advisable that he should be required to testify before a Magistrate that he wanted to stay?

The Chairman: I think the reverse procedure would be possible. If he has a right to be repatriated at the end of three years if he so desired and that right was withheld from him, then he could apply to the Magistrate as he does now on certain other grounds.

Mr. Clow: I understand that in more distant parts people have some difficulty in applying to the Magistrate.

The Witness: I should think that the District Magistrate would be the best solution.

Mr. Clow: He is a hard worked official as it is.

F-1556. *The Chairman*: If there was a general rule and the coolies were all aware of it the cases of attempt to withhold the right would not be many?—No.

F-1557. *Mr. Clow*: As far as our experience goes, the coolies to a large extent are not aware of the changes made in the law; for instance, they are not aware of the changes made in respect of penal contracts. If such a rule were introduced there might be some difficulty?—I think in that case the Indian Tea Association, Calcutta, ought to be made responsible for any garden who did not comply with the regulation.

F-1558. But all the gardens are not members of the Association?—90 per cent. are members.

F-1559. *The Chairman*: Will you tell us what has been the cost of your new type of houses which you showed us?—The estimated cost of each house was Rs. 700, but we have been able to build it slightly under that, Rs. 680 or Rs. 690.

F-1560. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What are the different kinds of roads in this part of Assam; are there district board roads and private roads?—There are local board roads, Government roads and private roads.

F-1561. With regard to private roads, is it the custom here as it is elsewhere in India to close the road once or twice a year and allow people to pass along on those particular days with a certificate or chit obtained from the owner?—Yes. In my case I keep a book and anybody who passes along the road has to sign in that book.

F-1562. How often do you do that in a year?—Only once.

F-1563. So that in the remaining 364 days in the year anybody is at liberty to walk along your roads?—That is so.

F-1564. Have you ever warned anybody?—Only on one occasion, and that was during the non-co-operation trouble in 1921. My coolies were very much against the Assamese who refused to sell food coming into the garden; a party of these Assamese came through my garden, and as there was a possibility of a breach of the peace, I had to warn them from entering my gardens.

F-1565. Barring that you never directly or indirectly warned anybody using your roads?—No.

F-1566. *Miss Power*: When the penal contracts were done away with did you make any effort to explain to the workers on your tea gardens of the change in the law?—No, not personally.

F-1567. Take the question of this Labour Commission. You of course got letters from your Association and read about it in the papers; you were able to take such steps as you desire to put your point of view before the Commission. Did you take any steps to let your workers know of the existence of the Commission and what it was out to do?—No.

F-1568. Do you think any of them were aware of the existence of this Commission?—Not the ordinary coolie, no; but the people who can read and write and get newspapers must have known.

F-1569. The coolies would not be in that position?—No.

F-1570. As the primary duty of the Commission is to investigate the conditions of the workers, do you feel that it should have been brought to their attention?—I am doubtful; I think they might have misunderstood it and you might have seen conditions which were not natural; I think as it is now you are seeing conditions which are perfectly normal.

F-1571. But are we getting the workers' point of view?—I should think so; as far as I know you are.

F-1572. By observation?—Yes.

F-1573. Supposing they have grievances, you do not feel they should have an opportunity of stating those grievances to this Commission irrespective of whether they may be relevant to our terms of reference or not, so that we may ascertain directly from the workers what their grievances are and sort out the relevant from the irrelevant?—No, I do not think so. I think seeing them as they are now in perfectly normal conditions is the best way. Had it been made public, to begin with they would not have known what the Commission was.

F-1574. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You have no objection to Miss Power, or any other Members of the Commission, going and interviewing any of your workers and asking them any questions they choose?—Not at all.

(The witness withdrew. The Commission adjourned till Friday, 10th January 1930.)

ASSAM.

Fifty-first Meeting.

JORHAT.

Friday, the 10th January 1930.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (*Chairman*).

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| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | DIWAN CHAMAN LALL, M.L.A. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. | L.T.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S. (<i>Medical Assessor</i>). |
| MR. JOHN CLIFF. | |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA | |
| L.T.-COL. H. C. GARBETT, Superintendent, Kanjikoah Budla Beta Tea Co., Ltd. | Assistant Commissioners. |
| MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN | <i>Lady Assessor.</i> |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. | |
| MR. A. DIBBIN | Joint Secretaries. |

Evidence taken at Cinnamara Tea Gardens.

KHUDIRAN (a male coolie), (interpreted).

F-1575. Where do you come from?—From Ranchi.

F-1576. When did you come from Ranchi?—Many years ago, but I do not remember when I came. When I first came I had a son with me. I remained for about a month and then went away back for my wife and family. After that two children were born here. I have five children.

F-1577. Do you like to live here better than in Ranchi?—It is about the same. I work here and I live. At Ranchi I had to work and live. My wife works. I have six children. Three are at home and three are working.

F-1578. Have you any land?—No.

F-1579. How much work do you do?—I prune 8 *dongs*. Each *dong* has five trees on it.F-1580. What do you get for the 8 *dongs*?—Four annas.

F-1581. How long does it take you?—By the time I finish the sun has set. Every day I do 4 annas worth of work.

F-1582. What time do you start in the morning?—I think it is between 6 and 8 o'clock.

F-1583. Do you do any extra work besides the 8 *dongs*?—I do *ticca* sometimes, but sometimes I have not even time to finish my fixed work.F-1584. Does your wife do any *ticca* work?—She cannot do *ticca* work.F-1585. Are you able to do *ticca* work when you are hoeing?—When I have got to do double hoeing I cannot do *ticca* work, but when it is light hoeing I can do *ticca* work.

F-1586. Do you have a holiday once during the week?—I get Sundays.

F-1587. How much did you earn last week?—Rs. 1-10. I got Rs. 1-8 for the fixed task and 2 annas for extra work.

F-1588. Do you save any money?—No. It is hard enough to make a living, and I have to buy clothes.

F-1589. Do you get any advances from the garden? If I ask for an advance I get it.

F-1590. Do you borrow money from any one?—I borrow from the shops. I owe between Rs. 20 and Rs. 25.

F-1591. Do you pay interest?—They charge interest, but I do not know what the rate of interest is. When I pay off some of the loan they write it in a book, and when I have paid it all up they tell me it is finished. That is all I know.

F-1592. You cannot read the writing in the book?—No.

F-1593. Do you get a bonus every year?—Yes, Rs. 12 annually.

F-1594. Do you think you are under any agreement?—Yes. I think when I am taking the agreement money I have to work a year—that it is an annual agreement. When I want to go away I will not take the agreement money.

F-1595. Does that mean that you think you cannot leave if you take the agreement money?—I think I cannot leave. If I go away the *chowkidar* will catch me and bring me back.

F-1596. Has any one ever said to you that the agreement has been done away with?—I think there is an agreement.

F-1597. When you go for your bonus money year by year what does the *Salib* say to you?—Nothing is said to me.

F-1598. Does the *sardar* call you out to work in the morning?—The *chowkidar* says “Come along quickly.”

F-1599. When you do not want to go to work what happens?—I go and tell the *Baboo* that I want leave to stay at home, and the *Baboo* says “Yes, you can stay at home.”

F-1600. What provision is made for your wife before and after confinement?—When a child is born I get Rs. 1-8 a week for three months for the wife. When the wife begins to work again I am given Rs. 2 *bakshis*, and afterwards another Rs. 2, until it comes to Rs. 10 in all.

F-1601. Does your wife work every day apart from these periods?—Yes. She takes the little child with her when she goes to work. She puts the baby to sleep in the shade of the trees and she works.

F-1602. Do you and your wife and family go quite freely to the doctor?—I go to the doctor when I am ill.

F-1603. Have you got faith in his medicines?—Yes. I would not go if I did not think he was going to make me well.

F-1604. Have you been a *sardar*?—Yes, twice.

F-1605. Did you bring any one back?—Once I got ill and came back without anybody. The next time I brought 15 recruits with me.

F-1606. What did you get for them?—I have no accounts. I have sometimes got Rs. 20, sometimes Rs. 10 and sometimes Rs. 5.

F-1607. When did you last go as a *sardar*?—The year I came here and I got 15 people.

F-1608. Are they still here?—Some have died, and some have run away. Some are here.

F-1609. Do you know where those who ran away went to?—No. When they run away they go by night when everybody is asleep.

F-1610. Have you ever wanted to go away yourself?—No.

F-1611. What time did you go home yesterday from your work?—I worked until 5.

F-1612. When you get a bonus of Rs. 12, does your wife get a bonus too?—She is given Rs. 6.

F-1613. What do you do with those Rs. 18?—I buy clothes for myself and for my children.

F-1614. Do you ever go to the toddy shop?—No, I very seldom go. When I have money I go. Sometimes I get a rupee's worth of rice, some of which I eat and some of which I make beer from. I only drink on Saturdays and Sundays.

F-1615. Do you eat anything with the beer?—If I have some parched rice I eat that with the beer. If not I drink the beer alone.

(The witness withdrew.)

BUTAN (*Sardar*), (interpreted).

F-1616 Where do you come from?—I do not remember what country I come from.

F-1617. Can you read and write?—No.

F-1618. How many men have you working under you?—To-day I have 21. Sometimes I have 20, and sometimes I have 25. I have no fixed amount of labour.

F-1619. Do you work with the same labour always?—I used to be where the women pluck the leaves. Now I am with these people. Sometimes the same lot come on and sometimes they vary.

F-1620. What work do you do and what are you paid?—I do 8 *nals*, five trees to the *nal*, and the payment is 4 annas.

F-1621. How long does it take you to do that work?—If I go out late I finish late. If I go out early I finish early. If I go out at 9, I can finish the work at about 4. Every labourer does not finish at the same time because some work more quickly. If he is a good worker he comes at 9 and can finish the work at 3.

F-1622. Do they do *ticca* work then?—Sometimes.

F-1623. Can a coolie earn 8 annas a day if he works all day?—Sometimes. They cannot earn 8 annas a day on consecutive days. They can only earn it on one day. If a worker is strong he can earn Rs. 1-12 or Rs. 1-14 in a week.

F-1624. Do the men under you rest during the day and do they take food?—In the day time they have tea. It comes in carts.

F-1625. How long do they stop working?—I give them about an hour to have tea and then I say "You had better hurry up and finish your task or else it will not be done. If you finish this you can go and get firewood."

F-1626. Do you get paid a fixed rate, and do you get any commission on the work done?—I have fixed wages of Rs. 12, and I get a commission of two pice to the rupee.

F-1627. Do you get an annual bonus?—Yes.

F-1628. Are you under an agreement?—Yes, I am under *girmit*.

F-1629. When the Sahib gives it to you in your hands what do you say?—I take the money and give a thumb impression.

F-1630. Do you save money?—I have no savings because I have to eat and live and buy clothes.

F-1631. Have you any land?—Half a *Pura*, which is 2/3rds of an acre.

F-1632. Have you any bullocks?—I have a pair of small bullocks and three goats. I have a wife who works, a little girl and my mother.

F-1633. Does the little girl work?—No.

F-1634. Do you get leave to go and work your land?—When I have cultivation to do I ask for leave, and then I go and do it.

F-1635. How do you get a lazy man to come to work?—The *chowkidar* drives them out of the house.

F-1636. Are they ever beaten?—He scolds them, but he does not beat them.

F-1637. Do you get your commission out of the wages of the coolies?—No, not out of their wages. If a man does a rupee's worth of work I get paid a commission on that work by the garden.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. J. H. COPELAND, Manager of the Cinnamara Tea Estate.

F-1638. *The Chairman*: Would you first of all tell us the length of time you have been Manager on this estate?—I have been 8 years in Cinnamara.

F-1639. And Cinnamara is one of the 13 gardens of the Jorhat Tea Company?—Yes.

F-1640. What is the total acreage and the acreage under tea?—Cinnamara and Goeahabie together have 1,826 acres under tea. Out of this total, 1,096 acres is in Cinnamara. The total acreage of the Cinnamara grant is 4,007 acres (minus Goeahabie).

F-1641. Of the balance how much is paddy land and how much is jungle?—The area under paddy is 1,807 bighas in Cinnamara and 324 bighas in the other estate, a total of 2,100 bighas. The balance is jungle.

F-1642. You are well off proportionately in the matter of paddy land?—Yes.

F-1643. What is your total population?—We have about 3,047 souls on Cinnamara, a total labour force of 2,257. This does not include Goeahabie.

F-1644. Have you got them divided into men, women and children?—No.

F-1645. With regard to recruiting methods, you recruit only by means of *sardars*?—Yes.

F-1646. How many *sardars* did you send out, how many returned and how many coolies did they bring with them?—In Cinnamara in 1928-29 we sent out 117 *sardars* and 17 of them did not return. The rest brought 195 coolies.

F-1647. I think that is an unusually large proportion of *sardars* who have returned?—Yes.

F-1648. Did I understand you have a sufficient number of coolies, over 2 per acre or so?—About 2·16 per acre.

F-1649. Is there any reason why you continue your recruiting?—Just to keep touch with the country.

F-1650. You do that systematically?—Yes, every year.

F-1651. Do you send down practically every coolie who asks to go out as a *sardar*?—Very nearly every coolie.

F-1652. In some cases do they take it as a form of leave to go to their own country?—Yes.

F-1653. You recognize that?—Yes, I do.

F-1654. You consider that as a means of giving them a holiday in their own country?—Yes.

F-1655. You are not disappointed if a certain proportion of them come back without any recruits?—No, not at all.

F-1656. Have you any idea of your losses through *sardars* who never return?—Last year I sent down a number of coolies as *sardars* and some of them have not yet returned. They might return after some time, but if they do not return within one year I take them off my books.

F-1657. Have you any suggestion to make as to any improvements in the present method of recruiting?—Personally I should think that if the Assam Labour and Emigration Act is repealed it will help us.

F-1658. You think that the present Act is too restrictive on the methods of recruiting?—Yes.

F-1659. Are you in favour of a system of recruiting by responsible agents who need not be *sardars* besides *sardari* recruiting?—Yes, but I should not like to express a definite opinion without consulting the other manager in the Company.

F-1660. Your Company is a member of the Indian Tea Association?—Yes.

F-1661. I think they have recommended an additional method of recruiting under proper control?—Yes.

F-1662. You give a man Rs. 12 and a woman Rs. 6 at the end of 12 months. In what light do you yourself regard that payment?—As a work bonus.

F-1663. Is that for good work done for the past year?—No, for the coming year.

F-1664. The idea is to give an incentive to the coolie to do good work for another year?—Yes.

F-1665. Do you take a receipt for the amount from the coolie?—We take the thumb impression in a book.

F-1666. We are hearing from the coolies that they are still under the impression that the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act, XIII of 1859 is in operation and that it implies an obligation upon them?—It takes many years for an impression like that to be wiped out of the coolie's mind.

F-1667. Do you not think that the thumb print might make the coolie think that there is some obligation?—It might, yes.

F-1668. Have you ever considered doing without thumb impression?—It is for the audit to say that. We are audited from Calcutta every year.

F-1669. Do they call for the thumb prints?—They call for receipts when big sums of money are paid.

F-1670. You do not take thumb prints for the ordinary wages?—They are small amounts paid weekly.

F-1671. We have been told that in some cases the thumb print has recently been done away with. Have you heard of any such cases?—No. Two or three coolies have come before me and have said that they did not want to give their thumb prints. I then put my signature to show that the amounts have been paid.

F-1672. Would not your mark be a sufficient verification of payment made in every case?—I think it is more to make the coolie realize that he has got the money.

F-1673. You yourself are aware that the older coolies at any rate think that this is part of the old agreement?—Yes, most of them do.

F-1674. Could you suggest any method of removing that impression from their minds?

Col. Garbett: What do you tell the coolies when you hand over the money?—I tell them that this is a bonus for their good work for the coming year. The coolies all muster together I crack a joke with them, tell them that this is a *bakshis* for them and hand over the money personally.

F-1675. *The Chairman:* When we were in the recruiting districts we were trying to find out the reasons for the obvious reluctance of people to go or to recommend migration to Assam for tea garden labour. And the impression we got was that they still regard Assam as a very distant country where people disappear if they once go there and are never to be heard of again. Of course an impression of that kind is probably the biggest blot on your recruiting if it is general in the recruiting areas. A suggestion has been made that there should be a system of repatriation at the desire of the coolies. If a family at the end of three years, after having had a reasonable time to learn what the life is like here and what the opportunities are for them, felt unhappy and wished to go back to their own country, they should be repatriated. Do you think that a system of that kind would be acceptable to your Company?—I am not quite in a position to reply to that question. But I do not see why it should not be tried.

F-1676. I suppose you do have a certain number of recruits who are unsuited to the climate or to the conditions of work on the garden and are unhappy here?—Yes

F-1677. I believe you do actually in many cases pay their expenses and send them home again?—Yes, we have done so.

F-1678. In fact you do not wish to keep a discontented coolie or family here?—I have no wish to keep them here.

F-1679. Therefore you would have no objection to a system where it would be one of the conditions of coming to Assam that a family, after they have had sufficient time to learn the life and conditions here, if they felt unhappy and wished to go back to their home country, should be free to do so?—I cannot say. It is for the management to say that.

F-1680. Supposing it had the effect as it might have, of doubling the number of persons offering to come to Assam, it would give you an opportunity to select the kind of recruits you want for the work on the gardens?—Yes, it would.

F-1681. At present under the *sardari* system anyone whom the *sardar* can persuade by hook or crook and who can pass through the test of the depot comes up here. Sometimes you find them arriving in a miserable and weak condition?—Yes, we do get them like that sometimes. We generally return them.

F-1682. Return them after all the expense?—Yes. We return coolies of that kind to the dépôt within a week of their coming to Assam.

F-1683. That must be a very heavy expense to any tea garden?—We occasionally get people who will never settle down to do any work; they have been beggars in the bazaars and they are not going to work here. We get rid of those undesirable persons.

F-1684. The *sardari* system sometimes results in a considerable number of undesirables being brought right up to the gardens and then being sent away?—Yes.

F-1685. Whereas if you had a larger number of applicants than you desire to take you would be able to make a proper selection at the other end and see that only likely men were sent up here?—Yes.

F-1686. *Mr. Cliff*: Is the cost of returning home such persons paid by the Tea Districts Labour Association?—No, the cost of recruitment and the cost of returning home such persons are paid by the gardens themselves.

F-1687. *The Chairman*: There is a very substantial loss in the present method of recruiting?—It is only very rarely that such cases come up.

F-1688. It is evident from the figures you have given that the *sardars* you have sent down are better men and more effective than those we have heard of in some other cases because you have a larger proportion of recruits through your *sardars*?—Yes.

F-1689. You do not specially pick out men and send them down as *sardars*?—No, they come to my office and say, "I want to go. I shall bring some coolies with me when I return." I put them a few questions and satisfy myself and then send them down.

F-1690. If there was a system which resulted in twice as many men in the recruiting areas wanting to come as your gardens were prepared to take, then your recruiting agents would be able to exercise a much better power of selection and send up people suited to the life and conditions of work here and more likely to settle down permanently?—Yes.

F-1691. Could you give us your health figures? Have you got the birth-rate and death-rate?—For a population of 3,000 the total number of births in 1929 was 86 and deaths 68.

F-1692. What about infant mortality?—I have no figures ready.

F-1693. With regard to still births, are they counted as a birth and a death or are they entered in a separate register?—(*Dr. Mawson*) They are counted as a birth and a death. We show them also in a separate column.

F-1694. I suggest it would be much better not to include them either as births or deaths and show them separately. Could we have these figures to-morrow?—(*Mr. Copeland*) Our doctor will supply them to-morrow.

F-1695. *Mr. Cliff*: What was the maximum number of recruits brought by anyone *sardar* in 1929?—10 or 11 was the maximum. One *sardar* brought 11 recruits and two others brought 10 each.

F-1696. How much did these *sardars* get for this recruitment?—The one got Rs. 180 and the others got Rs. 160 and Rs. 140, respectively.

F-1697. What is the difference due to?—We pay Rs. 20 per head. We pay less for children.

F-1698. Is this apart from all the travelling and other expenses?—Yes. This is what they actually get in the garden here. They often keep the money with me and take it whenever they want it for buying cattle or for any other purpose.

F-1699. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What do the coolies get on reaching your garden?—We segregate them in the dépôt for 10 days and then they come up to my office. I give Rs. 5 to each man, woman and working child in order to help them to settle down.

F-1700. *Mr. Cliff*: Take the question of the task to be done by the coolies. They told us just now that a coolie did 8 *nals* or 40 bushes and was paid 4 annas. Is that correct?—The whole thing is a unit. The garden you saw has 5 bushes to the *nal*; it varies according to the planting of the tea. That is the pruning unit. They can do as much as they like.

F-1701. Take the piece of work which we saw them doing just now. Do you agree with the statement made by the coolie?—I disagree with him. The man pointed out 8 bushes and called that a *nal*, but really 5 bushes make a *nal* in that particular section.

F-1702. He does 40 bushes and is paid 4 annas?—Yes.

F-1703. With regard to the time taken to do the work the *sardar* said roughly that he came at 9 o'clock and finished his work by 3 o'clock, the time when tea was brought. Is that a fair statement?—Yes, they spend a good deal of time on the road taking tea and having rest. They spend a full hour like that. It depends on the weather.

F-1704. Could you tell us what wages the man in front of us earned for the last few weeks?—I could give them by referring to the books.

F-1705. I gather that the *sardar* gets 1 anna on some gardens for a rupee worth of work done by his men. How much do you pay on your gardens?—I pay the *sardar* two pice per rupee worth of work done by the coolies besides his own wages.

F-1706. Could you just take two men and show us their respective earnings over a period, any reasonable period?—I have not the books here.

F-1707. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You pay them weekly?—Yes. But the staff gets paid monthly.

F-1708. With regard to the agreement, I think, on one garden to which we went there was a system of taking receipts, on another they took the thumb impression. I understand the old agreement used to be on stamp paper. Do you continue that form even now?—No, we have no stamp paper. We take a thumb impression in a book.

F-1709. I believe the Tea Association sent out a circular when the Act was repealed?—Yes.

F-1710. Did you get a circular?—Yes.

F-1711. What did the circular say?—I could not say without referring to it. Generally it said that the Act was repealed and that agreements under that Act could not be entered into after a certain date.

F-1712. Do the *ex-officio* inspectors, the Government officers inspect the wage books?—Yes.

F-1713. Do they inspect the books containing receipts for advances and bonuses?—They have never asked for them. The Deputy Commissioner inspects the garden and we produce before him whatever he wants.

F-1714. Government publish half-yearly returns in March and September each year showing the average wages of the coolies. Is the bonus included in that?—Yes, everything is included in that.

F-1715. *Col. Garbett*: The coolie by name Bhuta whom we examined this morning used the word "hazira". He said he was paid 4 annas for doing the *hazira*. You are now working on the unit system?—Yes.

F-1716. Why then does he use the word "Hazira" now? That used to be the case in the old days only?—It is the unit system we have on our garden. The coolie does four units and gets 4 annas. In the old days he used to call his work "hazira" and probably that has clung to the coolie. It used to be 4 annas then for a *hazira*.

F-1717. Your system is purely a unit system?—Yes. We pay 1 anna for so many *nals*, and call it a unit.

F-1718. *The Chairman*: In your view what is the amount that a good worker can earn working 8 hours a day?—It depends on the work. A good coolie can earn Rs. 1.4 to Rs. 1.8 in the plucking and hoeing seasons, but is not capable of doing it regularly.

F-1719. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: What does the average come to?—12 annas in the rains.

F-1720. Throughout the year?—In their half-yearly return for last September Government give the average earnings of the coolies as follows: men, Rs. 13-5, women, Rs. 13-4-7 and children, Rs. 9-13-8.

F-1721. *The Chairman*: These figures I understand are a complete average for your garden?—Yes.

F-1722. They apply both to men who have paddy lands and those who have not?—Yes.

F-1723. I take it that you have not paddy lands for all who would like to have them?—No. But it is our object to provide paddy lands for all.

F-1724. When the men first come here, as a rule they do not get paddy land?—No.

F-1725. It is only after they have worked for 2 or 3 years that they get any paddy land?—Not necessarily. They can have it even after a year.

F-1726. A man who has no paddy land and has no other work to do except probably gathering firewood in the jungle, and is prepared to work all the working hours with a view to saving money and buying bullocks or paying rent and taking up paddy lands, a man like that will be in a position to earn more money, I take it, than one who has to spend part of his time on his own paddy land?—Yes.

F-1727. You mix up these two classes in your average?—Yes.

F-1728. How much on an average will a man who works on the garden only earn?—An old coolie who has got acclimatized to the place will earn 8 to 12 annas on the average.

F-1729. Have you any number of coolies who do actually earn 8 to 12 annas?—Yes, in the season at this time of the year, it is very cold and they work from 11 to 3 and if they wish they collect firewood and go home.

F-1730. *Mr. Clow*: You have some experience of the recruiting districts?—Yes. I used to go down supervising the *sardars* for the Jorhat Tea Company.

F-1731. Did you notice any reluctance on the part of the people to come to Assam?—Yes, I noticed that in some of the villages where I had been. I could not get to the bottom of it, but I feel sure that the Assam Labour and Emigration Act had a lot to do with it.

F-1732. What years were you there?—Before the War from 1909 to 1914 I went recruiting every year in the cold weather.

F-1733. If there was free recruiting would there not be the danger of the *arkattis* coming in?—That is what we want to avoid. We could adopt measures to prevent that occurring. They would certainly try to sell coolies to those who are doing recruiting work.

F-1734. You showed us this morning a number of lines. I understand the people are free to go down and build their houses where they like?—Yes.

F-1735. Can anyone do that, a new or old coolie?—Yes.

F-1736. You have no *chowkidars* there?—We have *chowkidars* there in the Christian lines, but not in the *bushti* lines.

F-1737. What is the function of the *chowkidar*? Is he to see that the coolies do not leave the garden?—No, not at all. A coolie, if he wants to leave, generally leaves in the night. When a *chowkidar* sees a coolie bundling up his stuff he generally asks him the reason for it.

F-1738. If a coolie wants to go does he go to you and ask your permission?—Yes, I have people coming up to me and asking to leave.

F-1739. Are there many coolies who have done this?—Yes. Some of these coolies who have left me like that are now breaking stones and metalling the road. I do not mean old coolies who stay in the *bushti* and come and work here whenever they are hard up for money.

F-1740. In connection with welfare work do the managers and superintendents find any difficulty in getting sanction from the Agents to undertake such work?—I do not think so.

F-1741. You have never been refused?—Never.

F-1742. *Miss Power*: Is the expenditure on welfare work debited to capital account or revenue account?—To revenue account.

F-1743. *The Chairman*: Even if it is a capital expenditure such as putting up a new extension to a dispensary?—It comes out of revenue account unless it is the case of a big new building.

F-1744. *Miss Power*: If a manager wanted to build a small school or a small dispensary or anything of the kind it would affect his remuneration through his commission, if the expenditure comes out of revenue account?—Yes.

F-1745. *The Chairman*: Therefore a manager who goes in for improvements of that kind which are not charged to capital account is really doing it at his own expense?—Yes, but one gets only a percentage as commission on profit.

F-1746. *Miss Power*: Suppose a man had no rice land and spent his full day on the garden; would he be better off than a man who spent only a portion of his time on the garden, and spent the remaining portion in cultivating his own rice land?—It depends on the amount of land he possesses. We allot 1 or 2 *bighas* of land to each man according to the number of members in his family.

If a man has more than that it will be a disadvantage to others who have no rice lands. If a man has only one *bigha* he would be better off than a man who works full time on the garden.

F-1747. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Where exactly do you draw the dividing line?—I should say up to 3 or 4 *bighas* a man will be very well off; he would not want to work much on the garden.

F-1748. That is 1½ acres. What is the average holding?—Some coolies have five to six *bighas*. There are some very old coolies who have been here for many years who have big families. Some of them have 5 *puras*. I am trying to cut it down so that everyone may have an equal share of rice land.

F-1749. *Miss Power*: A man who has an exceptionally large area of rice land and works it properly does very little work on the garden?—Yes.

F-1750. The more the rice land the less the work he does on the garden?—Yes.

F-1751. Therefore it pays you to give a man only a moderate amount?—Yes, so that he may have occupation both at home and in the garden.

F-1752. *The Chairman*: A man working on his own land does not necessarily reckon the cash; he is doing his own job?—Yes, that is so.

F-1753. *Sir Alexander Murray*: A man working on his own land is contented?—Yes.

F-1754. It raises his status also?—Yes.

F-1755. Have you many cases of coolies owning *khet* lands and leaving the garden?—No, coolies owning lands very rarely leave the garden.

F-1756. I mean people who have secured a certain amount of money, rented Government lands and left you?—We have cases like that.

F-1757. After how many years' work on your garden do they leave you like that?—It rests with the man. He can do that in 3 or 4 years and probably even less. It depends on the caste of the man also; certain castes are very keen on saving money.

F-1758. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: How many of your people did that last year?—I think in the Hattighe division there are a large number like that. It will be about 60 out of a total population of 3,047.

F-1759. *Col. Garbett*: In other words a family can come here and work for 4 or 5 years and then be in a position to retire on their land?—Yes, if they make up their minds to do so when they come up.

F-1760. *Dirar Chaman Lall*: That means they will be able to buy a pair of bullocks, because I understand they only pay rent for the land and do not buy it?—Yes.

F-1761. *Sir Alexander Murray*: With regard to the commission charges, I believe the Jorhat Tea Company pays the managers a salary and a commission?—Yes

F-1762. On what basis is the commission paid? Is it before debits of capital expenditure or after debits of capital expenditure?—I think the supervisor will be able to answer that.

F-1763. You gave answers to one or two questions and I thought you said that the expenditure was first debited before the commission was charged?—They have a system in the company by which we get a commission on profit of revenue expenditure but not on capital expenditure. That goes to block account.

F-1764. You do not know how the books are made and what goes to revenue account and what goes to block account?—No.

F-1765. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Do you agree with Mr. Withers that an outsider should not be allowed to come on a tea estate for the purpose of organizing the workers into trade unions?—I think that if anyone wants to come on my garden he should inform me first.

F-1766. You remember the case of Erena Telenga who was charged under section 447, I.P.C., for criminal trespass?—Yes.

F-1767. He denied the charge and said that he had come there looking for work. You laid a complaint against him with the result that he was convicted for having caused annoyance to you?—Yes.

F-1768. Of what did the annoyance consist?—There was a rumour that some people were trying to induce my workers to strike. To prevent that I wanted to stop any outsider coming into my garden without informing me first.

F-1769. The charge against him according to you was that he had come here for the purpose of organizing the workers into trade unions?—I do not know what his purpose was.

F-1770. I have the judgment here. It says that the accused stated that he came here for the purpose of speaking to the workers about their *desher katha*, the story of their own country. He was then caught hold of by the *chowkidar* and the *mohurer* and taken to the police. Then six of your witnesses and the jailor were examined in that case. It was held by the Magistrate that there was no evidence on record to prove that this man was in touch with any trade union organization or was sent here by any trade union. The judgment runs: "I find that the accused entered into the Telenga line of Cinnamara Tea Estate at 7 p.m. on 4th August 1928 with intent to cause annoyance to the garden authorities. I hold the accused guilty of criminal trespass and convict him accordingly..... As a sentence of fine will not meet the requirements of the case the accused is sentenced to suffer rigorous imprisonment for a month under section 447, I. P. C." Do you think that you have power as it is to take such action against any outsider who comes here either with the object of speaking to your workers on the conditions of their country or of their own condition or with the object of organizing them into trade unions?—Yes, if the man comes on my land without informing me first.

F-1771. *The Chairman*: Was this particular gentleman known to you before?—No. I do not know the gentleman himself. But Mr. Sahoo was here at that time and it was given out that he was going to induce the workers to strike. We had to keep out everyone connected with this gentleman.

F-1772. Do you know the previous record of this gentleman?—We do not know more than that it was said he was connected with Mr. Sahoo. Any stranger coming in at that time, we took it that he had some connection with Mr. Sahoo.

F-1773. You know that the judgment says there is nothing on the record to prove his connection with Mr. Sahoo. The annoyance consisted in this that it was said that these people had come here to organize the workers. Such things are easily known all over the country and this particular case was given wide publicity. Could that not have something to do with the unpopularity of migration to Assam?—I could not say.

F-1774. Would you be prepared if it was recommended that the roads on your Estate should be acquired by Government and turned into public property?—I am not in a position to answer that.

F-1775. Do you think a step like that would go far to create a better atmosphere here?—I am not in a position to give any opinion on that point.

F-1776. I take it the practical state of affairs is that the roads are your private property and closed to outsiders?—We do not want to allow people who want to create mischief.

F-1777. In that particular case there was no mischief?—But we were in that pitch at that time; we thought any stranger coming in at that time might do some mischief. The man came here at 7 o'clock. He ought to have come to me first.

F-1778. You are aware that a man seeking work or looking for some relative might come in any hour of the day?—Day, but not night.

F-1779. Is it not possible that a man after a long journey might arrive at 7 o'clock?—Yes.

F-1780. What would a worker who has no paddy lands and who works all the time on the garden earn per week?—It depends on the class of work.

F-1781. Could you take 10 of your workers from your books and give us the total wages they earned during the course of the year?—I see from the books that one man has earned Rs. 201.5 in one year.

F-1782. What is the average earning?—I should put it at Rs. 155.

F-1783. *The Chairman*: That is a man without paddy land and who is keen on work?—Yes, that is the average; but he could do more than the average.

F-1784. Not an exceptional man, but a good keen worker?—Yes

F-1785. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: The memorandum submitted to us by one of the planters here says that there has been very little increase in the wages during the last few years and that the wages earned by the coolies are not sufficient to keep their body and soul together. Do you agree with that statement?—I do not agree.

F-1786. The man whom we saw just now said that he got Rs. 1-8 last week. Do you think that that is very much of a margin for a man like that?—You saw that the man spent a good deal on liquor. And a man like that does not do hard work; he probably works for two days in the week.

F-1787. You are probably aware that the City of Manchester consumes more liquor than the Province of Assam. As far as this man's consumption of liquor is concerned is it not more or less in the shape of food, a sort of nourishment?—Provided it is taken in the right quantity.

F-1788. Generally speaking on your estate,—I want you to give me your candid opinion—is there very much of a margin for an average worker in the wages that he earns?—An average worker should be able to save between Rs. 21 to Rs. 30 a year.

F-1789. *The Chairman*: In what way is this income registered,—in the purchase of bullocks and so on? Have you any figures to indicate the savings of these people?—I will try and get you the figures.

F-1790. How many cattle are there?—There are 1,171 cattle and 631 goats on the Estate of Cinnamara.

F-1791. For a population of 3,000 souls?—Yes.

F-1792. Any sheep?—There may be one or two; they are included under goats.

F-1793. *Mr. Cliff*: Dealing with cattle, is it possible Mr. Copeland to give us any figures with regard to the people who have been here during the last five years as to the number of cattle, goats and sheep they own?—I could not off-hand give the numbers. But I can say that a good many of the coolies who have been here for five years and less than five years have bought goats, cows and bullocks.

F-1794. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: How is it that at Digboi they are able to get their labour without any complex system of recruiting as you have? They get plenty whereas you are not able to do so?—They do not come under the Assam Labour and Emigration Act, I presume.

F-1795. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: No, recruitment generally to Assam is covered by the Act.

F-1796. *The Chairman*: There is no lingering prejudice in that case as in the case of the tea gardens?—Yes, that is so.

F-1797. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Could it be also a question of wages?—I do not think so.

F-1798. The average wage there is 14 annas a day which is obviously not the wage you pay here?—That depends on the class of work. I do not think an unskilled coolie is any better off there.

Diwan Chaman Lall: I refer to an unskilled coolie.

F-1799. *The Chairman*: There is no work there for women in the same proportion as here. There only 300 women out of 8,000, if I remember aright. Here they reckon the joint earnings of a man, woman and possibly a child?—Yes.

F-1800. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: You said a little while ago that you were not against the formation of trade unions?—No.

F-1801. If an attempt were made to form a trade union here you might not be anxious to take action under section 447 of the Indian Penal Code?—I have to do what I am ordered to do by the Company.

F-1802. Suppose the Government of India was under a pledge to allow freedom of association for agricultural workers and took such legislative steps as were necessary to see that trade unions were permitted to be formed without let or hindrance, would you support that action?—I have to discuss the matter before I could express an opinion.

F-1803. You are perhaps aware that the Government of India have ratified the 1923 Geneva Conventions regarding freedom of association of agricultural workers. The Government have taken no legislative step because they said that is not necessary. If it is proved to be necessary, would you support or oppose action of that kind as far as the tea estates are concerned?—That question should be addressed to the association.

(The witness withdrew.)

**Mr. C. K. BEZBARUAH, Boloma Tea Estate,
Nakachari P. O., Assam.**

F-1804. *The Chairman*: Will you let us have your wages book and advances book?—The wages and advances books for 1929 have been sent to Calcutta for audit.

F-1805. What is the acreage of the Boloma Tea Estate? How much is under tea and how much is other land?—There are 225 acres under tea. There are some 1,000 acres altogether, but I am not able to give the exact figure.

F-1806. What is the population living on the Estate?—I have not got the exact figure. It is between three and four hundred.

F-1807. Do you belong to the Indian Tea Association?—No.

F-1808. How do you do the recruiting for your labour?—I am a member of the Tea Districts Labour Association.

F-1809. You obtain your labour through that Association?—Yes.

F-1810. Recruiting by *sardars*?—Yes.

F-1811. How many recruits did you have last year and the year before?—I do not remember—only a few.

F-1812. Now I want to turn to your written statement?—There are some mistakes in the copy which was sent to the Commission. It was written when I was ill and I had not time to look over it.

F-1813. Would you like to correct anything in it?—This is my corrected statement (handing in copy).

F-1814. In the copy supplied to us you said: “The coolies are at liberty to leave the garden provided they clear their debts incurred from the garden taken on emergency.” I see you have now struck out the words “provided they clear their debts incurred from the garden taken on emergency”?—That should not have been struck out. That is the rule. They have to pay the advance before they go. If they go it is because they run away without paying. It is the rule of the garden that they shall pay up their debts and then go.

F-1815. Does this garden give Rs. 12 at the end of a year?—I give Rs. 10 bonus to the men and Rs. 6 to the women. If some of them want the money as an advance they can take it beforehand.

F-1816. That is one of the advances which must be repaid before they can leave?—That is not an advance. It is quite separate from an advance. It is a bonus.

F-1817. When the Rs. 10 bonus is paid to them, do they give a thumb impression as a receipt?—Yes.

F-1818. May we see the book with the thumb impressions in it?—Yes. (The book was produced.) This is not this year's book, but last year's book. This year's bonus has not yet been given out.

F-1819. You say that you have labour living in the *bustis*. How much labour comes from the *bustis*?—Of the *faltu* labourers which I get some live on our own land and some on Government land. They come in batches of 50, 60 or a hundred. (These figures indicate the number of outside *busti* coolies only.)

F-1820. When they come do they work under the same conditions and at the same rates as the other labourers on the estate?—I have the same rates for the men on the coolie lines and for the men in my own *bustis* and for the men in the outlying *bustis*.

F-1821. What wages do you pay? Do you pay on the unit system or on the *hazira* system?—I give wages on the daily *hazira* system and not on the unit system.

F-1822. How much a day does the coolie earn on your system?—I give 6 annas to the men for the *hazira* and 5 annas to the women. At that rate a man gets Rs. 9-12 and a woman gets Rs. 8-2 per month. But above that they can do *ticca* work.

F-1823. How long does the fixed work take to do?—If a man is healthy and he is doing light hoeing he can finish it in four hours. Otherwise some take 8 hours to do it.

F-1824. You say in your statement: "thus a labourer can earn double wages per diem"?—I do not say that for every consecutive day a man can do double work. He may do it for one week but not for the next, or he may do it for one day and not for the next. He cannot do double work for every day in every week.

F-1825. You speak rather strongly about the amount which is spent on drink by the coolies. Is there a drink shop on the estate, or near by?—There is no liquor shop on the estate. The nearest liquor shop is six miles away. Sometimes they go to it on a festival or anything like that, but otherwise they do not go.

F-1826. You say: "A coolie spends more money on liquor than he should, leaving only a fraction of his weekly or fortnightly wages with which to buy the necessities of life." Does that mean that they make liquor themselves on the estate?—That sentence is wrong. A man generally saves enough to buy the necessities of life, and then he drinks with the rest. There are some who are habitual drinkers—about 5 per cent.

F-1827. You say "Under the prevailing rates of wages in tea gardens, it is my honest conviction that the present wages are quite inadequate for the average coolies to keep their bodies and mind together"?—From my experience, the 6 annas and 5 annas which I give are not sufficient for them to live on. It may be sufficient for a man and his wife, but if they have children it is a case of starvation. If they want clothes it means going without a meal in order to get them.

F-1828. Then you say "If the coolie can accumulate a little sum he stays in the *busti* permanently." That seems rather to contradict the previous statement?—About 10 per cent. of the labourers do that. Some of them make their money in the plucking season. That is the time during which they save money. It is only a hard working labourer who can save money.

F-1829. About 10 per cent. of them do save money and live in the *busti*?—Yes, those who have been a long time on the garden.

F-1830. You say: "Deductions ranging from 2 annas to 8 annas are made for an advance taken or for small loans taken on emergent cases." Does that mean the repayment of the loan, or is that interest on the loan?—It is not interest. It is a deduction from the actual advance.

F-1831. For what purpose do the coolies get advances?—Sometimes they take advances for their *poojas* or to buy cattle. Sometimes if a man is not working for a week he wants an advance to carry on.

F-1832. How many cattle are there on the estate?—I do not know; many of the people have cattle.

F-1833. *Mr. Cliff*: How do you get the people to come out to work in the morning?—The *chowkidars* are supposed to call for the men and get them to come to work. They begin calling them from about 8 o'clock and between 9 and 10 they arrive at their work.

F-1834. If a man is a lazy man and does not want to work what happens then?—He is asked "If you do not work how will you be able to earn enough to eat," and if he does not listen—if he still wants to stay away—he is left alone.

F-1835. Does he continue to live on the garden if he will not work?—He is told "If you will not work on the garden you had better go."

F-1836. Have you ever known of a man being dismissed because he would not work?—I had an instance about a week ago of a man like that. He said he could not work at all. He said he would rather beg than do work, and I told him to go.

F-1837. Do the *chowkidars* ever get cross and hit the men?—I have not heard of things like that. When things occur like that and some *chowkidars* beat or abuse the men, the matter is taken up and compensation is paid to the man who has been beaten.

F-1838. Does that mean that some men on this estate have been hit by a *chowkidar* and have had compensation paid to them?—I have not had that occur for a long time. Cases like that are very rare. I do not remember when I had a case like that.

F-1839. Does the *sardar* ever get cross and hit the people?—I have no instance like that.

F-1840. *Dewan Chaman Lall*: Would it be brought to your notice?—Yes, they would come and tell me.

F-1841. *The Chairman*: There is an appeal, is there not, on the part of the coolie, if force has been used. He can go to the magistrate?—Yes, he can go.

F-1842. *Mr. Cliff*: How far is the nearest magistrate from here?—The police station is four miles away from here. I had an instance of a *mohurer* beating one of the men and so I told him to go and lodge a complaint, and it was done. I dismissed the *mohurer* afterwards and the coolie is still on the garden. He was paid compensation.

F-1843. Is any agreement used when advances are given?—No, there is no agreement.

F-1844. Who is responsible for keeping this receipt book?—An office clerk.

F-1845. Does he enter this book up in the form in which it is entered up under "Instructions," namely, date of old agreement and date of new agreement, in pen and ink?—For the last year and a half it has not been done like that. Some of them have been taking advances, but not all. Since the last year and a half I have not given any advances like that.

F-1846. Have you got a receipt book for the bonuses other than this particular one?—No.

F-1847. Is this the only one?—Yes. Sometimes they want more than the advance allowed to them—say for two years. In that case a stamped receipt is given and the thumb impression taken on it.

F-1848. A civil agreement?—Yes.

F-1849. In the book there is stated, in 1928, the date of the new agreement. In the book we have had does the date of the new agreement refer to the civil agreement which is now instanced?—It is the new civil agreement.

F-1850. Would it be possible to see the civil agreement to which this book refers?—It is only when they want more money than the bonus that they take the agreement form.

F-1851. Written in this book, 1928, is "date of new agreement." I want to know what agreement that refers to?—It is a mistake of the clerk. It should not have been "new agreement." It should have been "bonus."

F-1852. Have you seen this book?—I have not personally seen it.

F-1853. Is the bonus given for the succeeding 12 months' work?—They are told "We give you Rs. 10 and you have to work the next 12 months."

F-1854. In 1928 there are a whole number of bonuses given on the 4th of the seventh month. There have been no bonuses before that date. Then there is entered another set of bonuses on the 3rd of the eighth month, and then a few on the 16th of the eleventh month?—These have been given to them at different periods when they have asked for them.

F-1855. The record shows that there is no entry for any date earlier than July. Then there is another series of bonuses given in August, and another series given in November. They have no relation to the year 1927 in regard to the 12 months. I want to find out how it comes about that the bonuses are given under three separate periods without any relation to 12 months in 1927. I want to know how this book proves that you give a bonus for 12 months?—All those people who have asked for the money have been given it.

F-1856. Are there a number of people who do not get the bonus?—Yes.

F-1857. Can we see some of the stamped civil agreements?—Yes.

F-1858. You say that extra *ticca* work is done. Can we have the wages book. Will you take the month of September last year and show us cases of extra *ticca* work?—That book has gone to Calcutta for audit.

F-1859. Your memorandum shows that the coolies used to work 8 hours a day. Now it has changed over to a new system of work. When was that change made?—I used to pay monthly, and then I started fortnightly payments. Now I pay weekly. I used to find when I gave monthly payments that the coolies used to take advances quite a good deal, not knowing what they were going to get in the month. Out of the three sorts of payments, I find the weekly payment is the best.

F-1860. Reading your memorandum it appears to me that the average man, if he is healthy, can hoe a *hazira* in a day. Is it an average man's day's work hoeing a full *hazira* of land?—An average man can do that amount of work.

F-1861. Is it clear that *hazira* here agrees with what is stated here, namely, that a man is hoeing 30 *nals*?—For his light hoeing a man does 30×1 ; for a little harder hoeing than that it is 25×1 , or even 20×1 .

F-1862. Is that equivalent to the *hazira*?—During April, May and June a man can do 30 \times 1 as his day's *hazira*. When the rains start he can only do 25. But it is according to the time of the year.

F-1863. If you say that a man cannot live on the wages you pay, why do you not pay him a higher wage?—I have not raised the wages because I can get labour at 6 annas, and I find that all the surrounding gardens are paying the same amount. I do not see any reason why I should raise it.

F-1864. Do you pay a fixed rate to the *sardars* and do you pay a commission. If so, how much?—I pay weekly wages to the *sardars* according to their grades. They have fixed rates, but also grades.

F-1865. Do they get a commission?—They are allowed commission for *ticca* work—one anna in the rupee. They get that commission because they remain on the field longer if *ticca* work is being done. It is only for the *ticca* work that they get commission.

F-1866. It is one anna in the rupee on the *ticca* work?—Yes.

F-1867. *Mr. Ahmed*: Does that come out of the coolies' wages?—No.

F-1868. *Mr. Clow*: When did your books go to Calcutta for audit?—On the 4th or 5th.

F-1869. Did the Labour Enquiry Committee of 1922 visit this garden?—No.

F-1870. They made no enquiries from you?—No.

F-1871. *Col. Garbett*: Who are the auditors in Calcutta?—My own office.

F-1872. What name?—The Boloma Company.

F-1873. What address?—26, Park Lane.

F-1874. *Mr. Clow*: It is not true that when the Labour Enquiry Committee came round in 1922 your books had been sent to the auditors' office?—No.

F-1875. Just now a number of coolies came up to me and complained that they were severely beaten with whips. A woman said that to me too. Is that true?—I do not know about it.

F-1876. Can you suggest why they should have said that if it is not true?—I do not know.

F-1877. Do you pay higher wages than the other gardens round about?—I am not sure, but as far as I have heard I think I do pay more than the other gardens.

F-1878. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Have any outsiders access to your garden without your permission?—There is no right of way, but everybody can come in.

F-1879. If you do not want anybody to come in you can prevent him from coming in. The roads are private?—The roads are my own so they are private.

F-1880. Is it within your experience that the magistrate in this Province generally favour the tea planter in cases where the tea planter takes action against the workers or where the workers take action against the tea planters?—I do not know for certain, but I think sometime ago there was a case and it was decided in favour of the planter. I saw it in the papers.

F-1881. What case was that?—I do not remember.

F-1882. Does the magistrate usually side with you when there is a case between a coolie and you?—I have not had a case against a coolie for a long time.

F-1883. If you consider that the wages are starvation wages, why do you not pay the coolies better wages yourself and make a move in the matter, and get all the tea planters in this district to give better wages to their workers?—Not being a member of the Tea Association I have not proposed anything.

F-1884. Have you anything to say about recruitment?—I find the present system of recruiting very expensive. Each recruit costs from Rs. 125 to Rs. 150.

F-1885. *The Chairman*: Will you show us your book for recruiting expenses for the last two years?—I cannot give you an account of what each individual has cost.

F-1886. Do you keep, like other planters, a book showing each *sardar* and the expenses of each *sardar*?—Yes.

F-1887. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: What suggestion have you to make about recruiting?—There are several Indian companies. They want to form their own recruiting office and apply for a licence. They have applied during the last two years, but they have not received sanction.

F-1888. *Sir Alexander Murray*: To whom did you write the letters?—The Calcutta office wrote to the Government of Assam.

F-1889. Asking to be formed into an association?—Yes.

F-1890. What reply did they get?—The Assam Labour Board recommended it, but we have not heard anything more from the Assam Government.

F-1891. When did you make the application?—About two years ago.

F-1892. *Dewan Chaman Lall*: Are you in favour of a re-constitution of the Assam Labour Board, provided it is recommended that it should continue to exist on the basis of an equal representation of workers and of employers?—I do not agree with the present scheme. We suggest raising the number of members from 9 to 16. But I have not got the scheme with me.

F-1893. Is that the scheme providing that each recruiting area should have a representative on the board?—Yes.

F-1894. *Mr. Ahmed*: You say you are in favour of raising the wages of the coolies. Do you think they will be more efficient if they receive higher wages?—It is very hard on the coolies that their wages have not been raised, because the cost of living has risen.

F-1895. If their wages are raised and thereby they get more to eat, do you think their efficiency will be increased?—I think if they had better living they would be able to work better, because better living will produce better health.

F-1896. If they are given the opportunity of primary education do you think they will take advantage of it, and thus uplift their condition?—I think that education will be good for them, because they will know how to live better, and they will know their rights, and so on.

F-1897. *The Chairman*: Have you a school on your garden?—No.

F-1898. *Mr. Ahmed*: You say that the present system of recruiting coolies is very expensive. Do you think that if a public employment bureau were established, it would be a better system?—I do not mind.

F-1899. *Miss Power*: Is there any maternity benefit scheme in operation here?—I have no hard and fast scheme, but when a child is born I give Rs. 5.

F-1900. During the time a woman is at home on account of child-birth does she get any compensation for lost wages?—No.

F-1901. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You say in your memorandum that you give two months' leave before child-birth and three months' leave after child-birth. Do you keep the woman without any pay for those five months?—Yes.

F-1902. *Col. Russell*: Have you a doctor on the estate?—Yes.

F-1903. What are your main diseases here? Do you get malaria?—(*Dr. Chakravarti*) Yes, we get a good deal of malaria sometimes.

F-1904. There is a good deal of hookworm on the estate?—One or two cases.

F-1905. Do you know a hookworm case when you see it?—There are none here.

F-1906. I have seen half a dozen cases already myself. Besides malaria and hookworm do you get much dysentery?—Rarely. In June and July there are dysentery cases here.

F-1907. How many births did you have on the estate last year?—Ten.

F-1908. What is the total population on the estate?—From three to four hundred.

F-1909. How many deaths did you have on the estate last year?—Eleven.

F-1910. Were all the births and deaths registered?—Yes.

F-1911. What was the total expenditure on medical supplies for the year 1929?—I cannot give it for 1929 as the accounts have not been made up, but for 1928 I can give it to you.

F-1912. *Sir Alexander Murray*: From the Government returns I see that the average pay in September was about Rs. 10 for a man and about Rs. 10 for a woman. That is about Rs. 20 for a man and a woman. Is not that sufficient for them to live upon?—For a man and woman it is quite enough, but when they have children it is not enough.

F-1913. Is not Rs. 20 sufficient in this country for a man and woman with two children to live upon?—No. They may be able to get enough to eat with the money, but it is not possible for them to buy extra things such as clothing.

F-1914. *Rev. Saikia*: Do you give any pension to the old coolies on your garden?—No.

F-1915. During the winter do you give the coolies blankets, etc.?—Yes.

F-1916. You say that you consider that education is necessary. Why have you not provided school arrangements on this estate for educating the children?—None of the other gardens have done it, and I have not done it either.

F-1917. On the wages they receive, after paying for the necessities of life, do you think that the coolies can afford to pay for the education of their children?—No, I do not think that is possible.

F-1918. *Mr. Cliff*: I see that in March 1929 loans were given amounting to over Rs. 1,000. Was there any special reason why over Rs. 1,000 should be given in that month?—It is the time to buy cattle and other things.

F-1919. Where do you keep a record of repayments of the loans by individuals? The deductions appear in the wages book.

F-1920. Can you identify that signature (handing document to witness)?—No.

F-1921. One of your staff said I could have the original of that. Will you hand it in?—I will get a copy made and send you the original.

F-1922. Can you let us have a signed agreement which shows the consideration for which a man signs a document of that character. I would like a signed agreement with the amount stated?—I will send it on to you. The man who is in charge of office is not here at the moment.

F-1923. *Rev. Sankia*: Do the coolies know that there has been a repeal of Act XIII of 1859?—I do not know.

F-1924. *The Chairman*: When did you begin the use of this civil agreement? Since the repeal of the Act I introduced this agreement.

F-1925. Would you be in favour of giving a right to every coolie to be repatriated at the Company's expense at the end of three years if he was unhappy in his work here?—Yes. I am quite willing to send him back at the Company's expense after three years.

F-1926. If that were generally known do you think that would add to the contentment of the people, and also tend to free recruiting in the recruiting districts?—Yes. I thoroughly believe that if the coolie and his wife could go back after three years they would be more contented, and that we should also be able to get more labour. Considering the present fall of the tea market, though it may be hard on the tea gardens to raise the present wages of the coolies, yet some sort of device should be adopted, such as reducing the crop or prohibiting bad teas to be sold in the market, or burning of bad teas, to save the tea industry, and thus to enable the gardens to raise the wages of the coolies.

(The witness withdrew.)

KADAMONI (a woman coolie).

F-1927. How long have you been on this garden?—Three years.

F-1928. Where did you come from?—Raipur.

F-1929. Did the *sardar* bring you here?—No, I came of my own accord. I came from the Noakachari garden with my husband.

F-1930. Do you work on the tea garden?—I work on the garden every day.

F-1931. How many hours a day do you work?—I go to work between 6 and 7, and I return home at 5.

F-1932. How much did you make last week?—My weekly wages I got to-day, and that was Rs. 1-2-6.

F-1933. Was that for working six days in the week?—Yes.

F-1934. Did your husband work six days?—Yes.

F-1935. What did he earn?—He got Rs. 2.

F-1936. Have you any land?—When I came here I did so with the idea that I would get one *pura* of land, and a pair of plough cattle, but I have been given two-thirds of an acre of paddy land, and as I have no plough cattle I take half and the person who supplies the cattle takes half. I get no time to do the paddy cultivation.

F-1937. If you want to work on your land, and not on the garden, on any day are you free to do so?—No. I get no leave.

F-1938. If you want to take a day off and work on your land are you not allowed to do so?—No, I get no leave.

F-1939. Are you ever beaten on the garden?—Yes, the babu and *chowkidar* beat. Everybody beats except the manager of the garden.

F-1940. What were you beaten for?—If I do less work I am beaten. An employee who gets Rs. 4 also beats me.

F-1941. What are you beaten with?—With a cane.

F-1942. How often were you beaten last week?—I have never been beaten, but the other women have been beaten.

F-1943. Why were you not beaten?—I am not frightened of speaking, so I do not get a beating.

F-1944. Have you ever asked to leave the garden?—Yes. If my name is struck off I will go away. I have not got any advance, and I have never taken any *girmi* money.

F-1945. Have you ever asked for your name to be taken off the books of the garden?—Yes, I have.

F-1946. Who did you ask?—I have spoken to the manager to strike off my name, but he has not done so, so I have not gone.

F-1947. Do you wish to stay here or go back to your country?—You can send me to Raipur, or you can send me to my old garden. I came from another garden to this garden.

F-1948. Was the condition in the other garden better than here?—The conditions of the gardens are the same. There are the same troubles, only I thought when I came here I would get land for cultivation. That is why I came here.

F-1949. Will you go back to the other garden if the sahib sends you?—Yes.

F-1950. You would prefer the life on the other garden where you were before?—Here I get for my *hazira* 6 pice. At the other garden I used to get 5 annas, so I was better off there. Can I have my name cut off the register here so that I can go home?

F-1951. Do the *chowkidars* come round at night to see if you are there?—Yes, he comes round at night to see if we are at home. He flings the door open even if we are not properly dressed. I am even made to work when I am ill.

F-1952. Would you prefer to go back to the garden where you were before, or to go to your home country?—I do not mind where you send me, whether to my country or to the other garden. I want to leave this garden. Since I have been on this garden I have been having a life of great severity, hardly getting a handful of rice to eat. I would be quite pleased to go back to my old garden if I am allowed to go.

BHANO (a woman coolie).

F-1953. How long have you been on this garden?—Two weeks.

F-1954. Where did you come from?—Balijan Tea Estate.

F-1955. Who did you come with?—The *arkatti* enticed me here.

F-1956. Does he work here?—Yes. He is here in the garden. He brought four of us. Two have run away, and me and my husband are here.

F-1957. What did the *arkatti* say to persuade you to come to this garden?—He told me that if I came here I would be able to earn a lot of money, and after earning that money I could go home to my own country.

F-1958. Do you wish to go back to the other garden?—Yes.

F-1959. Do the others who came with you want to go back?—They have run away. Me and my husband have remained.

F-1960. Do you know the name of the *arkatti*?—Yes, Janumeah.

Would you and your husband go back to the other garden if you were sent by the sahib?—Yes.

F-1961. Have you had your weekly wages?—No.

F-1962. Have you been beaten since you were here?—No.

F-1963. Have you any children?—I have no children with me. They are in my country.

F-1964. How long have you and your husband been away from your country?—Three years.

F-1965. Have you not had your children with you?—Since I have been here I have not had my children with me. They have been in my own country for the whole three years. Because I cannot go home I am very unhappy at not seeing my children.

F-1966. You would wish to go home with your husband?—Yes, I would like to go home.

F-1967. When you were on the other garden, from which you were enticed, did you want to go home?—Yes, even on the other garden I wanted to go home.

F-1968. Did you ask to go home?—Yes, I asked to be sent back.

F-1969. Would you bring your children here if you went home?—I would not bring them here, but I would go every year and see them.

F-1970. Have you had any children here?—No.

CHUTTAN (a male coolie).

F-1971. Where do you come from?—From Ledo. I really belong to Sitapur near Lucknow.

F-1972. How many years have you been in this country?—One year in Ledo, and ten months here. An *arkatti* brought me here.

F-1973. What work did you do at Ledo?—I was a waterman in the cookhouse of the manager.

F-1974. Why did you come here to the tea gardens?—The sahib got angry with me and told me he would send me to the mine. I have never done work in the mine, and I got frightened and ran away.

F-1975. And then you came here?—I came to Nakachari first. Then I met the *mistri* at the station who told me "You can come and do water carrier's work" and he brought me here. He said "It is very good work, and it is a very good place." When I came here I was given a brass plate and a brass cup and a little iron cooking pan, and some rice and *dul*, and my name was written in the books and I was sent to the lines.

F-1976. Did you have to put your thumb print?—No.

F-1977. Do you like to work in the tea garden?—No, I do not. I will die if I stay.

F-1978. Did you come alone or with your wife?—My wife is in my country. I have come alone. I have got my family and mother and father in my country.

F-1979. Do you wish to bring your wife and relations here, or do you wish to go back to them?—I would rather go back to my country. I will not remain here.

F-1980. What was the name of the *mistri* who brought you?—He has gone away. I only know he was a fair man.

F-1981. Do many men run away from here?—A lot of people do run away, but I have not run away because I am frightened in case I am beaten with a whip. The skin all comes off your back.

F-1982. Have you been beaten?—I have never done any bad work.

F-1983. Have you seen any other people beaten?—Yes, I have seen a lot of people being beaten.

F-1984. You have not been beaten yourself?—No.

F-1985. Have you been to hospital with your hand?—I have gone to the hospital for a week. You are not given any money while you do not work?—They send me to work, but I cannot work with this hand.

F-1986. You said you were sent to the lines. Who do you live with?—I live alone in the lines.

F-1987. What wages do you get?—I work from six to five, and I get ten pice. Even when I go for a call of nature the *chowkidar* keeps an eye upon me in case I should run away.

F-1988. Have you saved anything?—When I was working as a servant I saved a little money, and sent it home—Rs. 25, but here I am starving, and sometimes I go without food.

F-1989. At any time you want to leave this place you can leave. There is no law which compels you to remain on. Have you any debts?—No, I have no debts.

**Evidence before Sub-Committee, at Baloma Tea Garden, 10th January
1930.**

SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E.

DIWAN CHAMAN LALL, M.L.A.

MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S.

MISS B. M. LE POER POWER.

LT.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S.

(1) Mt. Miriam Musulmani (woman coolie).

F-1990. *Mr. Clow*: Where do you come from?—From Ballia district.

F-1991. When did you come here?—A year ago.

F-1992. What do you wish to complain about?—I want to get my name cut off the books so that I can go back to my own country.

F-1993. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Were you beaten?—Yes, by the *babu*.

F-1994. When?—A week ago.

F-1995. What were you beaten with?—With a cane.

F-1996. Have you any marks?—Yes, on my arm. (The witness exhibited a bruise in the form of a double line several inches long on the lower arm, which in Col. Russell's opinion was probably not caused by a cane.)

F-1997. Why were you beaten?—I was plucking old leaves at the end of the season and I had finished one block. I asked the *sardar* if I could go on to another block. The *babu* said I was to finish that block, turning round at the head. I wanted to go to another block.

F-1998. *Mr. Clow*: Was your boy beaten too?—Yes.

F-1999. Why?—Because he came to save me he was beaten too.

(The boy, Suleman had what were, in Col. Russell's opinion cane-marks on the thigh and hip and corroborated this statement of his mother.)

F-2000. When did this happen?—Two weeks ago.

F-2001. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Did you get any advance of money?—No.

(2) Suleman, (Musulman).

F-2002. *Mr. Clow*: Is this your mother (Mt. Miriam)?—Yes.

F-2003. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Are you watched here?—Yes, even when we go to answer the call of nature.

F-2004. Can you not leave if you wish?—No, we cannot leave.

F-2005. Did you get a *girmit* advance?—No.

(Miss Power left.)

(3) Babu J. Chakravarti, Doctor.

F-2006. *Mr. Clow*: You are doctor on this estate?—Yes.

F-2007. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you know this woman (Mt. Miriam) and her son?—I have known them for six or seven months.

F-2008. Did they come to you when they were injured?—The boy showed me two cane marks, one on the thigh and one on the hip. They could have been caused by one stroke.

F-2009. Did the woman come to you and show any mark?—She said "I was beaten on the lower part; how can I show you?"

F-2010. What is this mark on her arm?—I cannot say whether that is a cane mark or not, but she didn't show that to me.

F-2011. *Mr. Clow*: Did you beat a man for eating cow's flesh?—They eat rotten cow's flesh, and I warned him thrice. Then when I went to him he caught my neck and pushed me, and then I beat him.

(The man's back and back of the left arm exhibited a number of bruises which, in Col. Russell's opinion were made by a cane.)

(4) Ramswami, labourer.

F-2012. *Mr. Clow*: Where do you come from?—From Waltair district.

F-2013. If you wish to leave the garden, are you able to do so?—The manager and the *chowkidar* keep us back.

F-2014. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How do they keep you back?—We are kept here by the *chowkidar* and sometimes beaten, and the *chowkidar* goes round at night with a lamp, and even opens the door to see if we are there.

F-2015. *Mr. Clow*: How could you get away without money?—I would do it by begging and would work if I could find it on the way.

F-2016. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Why do you not go to another garden?—They do not allow me to leave.

F-2017. Did you get a *girmit* advance?—No.

F-2018. Never?—Not in the three years I have been here.

F-2019. *Mr. Clow*: Has your thumb impression been taken?—My mark was taken when I came to the garden.

F-2020. How did you come to Assam?—I came to Chaprai garden near Nakhwa in Sibsagar.

F-2021. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How long did you stay there?—One year.

F-2022. How did you get here?—At Amgur station an *orkatti sardar* told me that if I came and worked on this garden I would be able to save money.

F-2023. Did he give you anything?—No.

F-2024. Where is he now?—He has run away.

ASSAM.

Fifty-second Meeting.

JORHAT.

Saturday, the 11th January, 1930.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (*Chairman*).

| | |
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| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | DIWAN CHAMAN LALL, M.L.A. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMAD, M.L.A. | L.T.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S., <i>Medical Assessor</i> . |
| MR. JOHN CLIFF. | |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA | |
| L.T.-COL. H. C. GARRETT, Superintendent, Kanjikoah Budla Beta Tea Company, Limited. | <i>Assistant Commissioners.</i> |
| MRS. ATAU'R RAHMAN, | <i>Lady Assessor.</i> |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. | |
| MR. A. DIBBIN, | <i>Joint Secretaries.</i> |

Mr. W. G. McKERCHER, Chairman, Mr. J. M. KILBURN, Vice-Chairman, Mr. E. J. NICHOLLS, Mr. E. S. ROFFEY and Dr. McCOMBIE, representatives, of the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association.

F-2025. *The Chairman*: We have a short paper from your Branch giving us your membership and the acreage of tea that you cover; am I to take it that you come also in support of the memorandum submitted to us by the Indian Tea Association?—(Mr. McKercher) Yes.

F-2026. Did your Branch take part in the drawing up of that statement?—Yes.

F-2027. And therefore we may take it that that represents the views in the main that you wish to put before the Commission?—Yes, in the main. Under "The need of retention of control" I propose to substitute the word "control" for "legislation"; that is the only thing.

F-2028. *Colonel Garbett*: Do you agree that legislation is necessary as a safeguard?—No, I consider the necessary form of control can be obtained without legislation, namely, by the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association and the Tea Districts Labour Association.

F-2029. Do you agree with Mr. Brett's evidence at Patna as reported in the *Statesman* on the 19th December objecting to the un-controlled system of recruiting?—No. I understand Mr. Brett objected to the uncontrolled recruiting because (1) of the impossibility of a coolie returning home against the will of his employer, and (2) labourers could not be traced by their relatives.

With regard to the first objection, I consider his statement is a libel on the tea industry, as the coolie can and does leave the estate for other work whenever he likes; as to his second point, every recruit is and can be registered in the recruiting dépôt.

F-2030. *The Chairman*: My recollection and that of some of my colleagues is that the newspaper report is not to be taken as an authentic record of what Mr. Brett said to us.—Then I beg your pardon.

F-2031. That caveat should appear on the record?—Yes.

F-2032. Will you complete what you were saying?—There is a register kept of every coolie brought in and every *sardar* sent down.

F-2033. *Colonel Garbett*: It means that a labourer leaving the recruiting district can be traced if required?—Yes. Of course, I agree there should be a system of registration.

F-2034. *The Chairman*: Will you tell us a little more about this Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association; you have told us in your statement that your Association was formed in 1889 and the present membership represents 251,277 acres of tea?—(Mr. Roffey) Since that note was sent in, the acreage has increased; it now amounts to 280,139 acres.

F-2035. How does that affect the percentage which you represent?—The percentage is practically correct; we represent 89½ per cent. of the total area under tea in the Assam Valley.

F-2036. Is it possible for a tea garden without being a member of your Branch still to be a member of the Tea Districts Labour Association?—Yes.

F-2037. There is no necessary connection between the two?—No.

F-2038. How often do you hold meetings of your Branch of the Association?—(Mr. McKercher) The General Committee meet twice a year and sometimes three times; if anything important crops up it meets more frequently. Then there are 15 Sub-Committees which hold meetings periodically: every month when the rains will permit it or when there is anything important to discuss. They are responsible for reporting to the General Committee anything unusual, and then, if necessary, a General Committee meeting will be called.

F-2039. Will you tell me the kind of business that is conducted?—The Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association was formed on the 29th October, 1889, with a membership representing 76,692 acres of tea. Its objects are (1) to take up all matters connected with the Tea Industry needing attention, (2) to keep as much as possible in touch with Government and other associations and bodies having the same or like objects in view and (3) to maintain a united feeling in the province. All companies, proprietors or persons having or owning tea estates in the Assam Valley are eligible as ordinary members. For administrative purposes the Assam Valley is split up into 15 centres, namely (1) Dooom-Dooma, (2) Dibrugarh, (3) Panitola, (4) Tingri, (5) Moran, (6) North Lakhimpur, (7) Sonari, (8) Nazira, (9) Jorhat, (10) Golaghat, (11) Nowgong, (12) Bisnath, (13) Tezpur, (14) Borsola and (15) Mangaldai. Each of these centres containing members of the Association, elects a District or Sub-Committee annually from their number, and each of these District or Sub-Committees is entitled to one representative on the General Committee for every complete membership area of 9,000 acres within its jurisdiction, but no District or Sub-Committee may be represented on the General Committee by less than two members. These representatives form the General Committee who manage the affairs and funds of the Association and select their own Chairman and Vice-Chairman whose duties, like those of the other members of the General Committees and Sub-Committees are honorary. The present membership of the Association represents 280,139 acres of tea.

F-2040. In addition to what I may call protecting the industry and looking after the interests of the industry in matters of legislation and administration, does your Association consider the constructive improvement of the tea industry?—Yes.

F-2041. You have told us that your whole executive only meets two or three times a year?—That is the General Committee; the other Committees meet monthly or approximately monthly.

F-2042. Are there meetings of the whole Association at any time?—Yes, there is a General Meeting once a year.

F-2043. Have you any means of encouraging individual managers to bring forward their ideas for the improvement of conditions generally in the tea

industry?—Yes; the Sub-Committees represent the gardens in the different small areas, and any garden of any size has representation. Anything brought forward is considered by the Sub-Committee and forwarded to the main body or headquarters.

F-2044. Clearly in such a widespread industry there must be a good deal in the nature of experiment for the improvement of conditions in the industry by individual planters?—Yes.

F-2045. I am anxious to know if your Association affords a means for bringing into the common stock the ideas of individual planters so as to try and bring all the estates up to the level of the best?—If there is an estate rather behind the rest, or any complaint against an estate, it would come before the Committee.

F-2046. How would it be dealt with?—It would be sent to the Sub-Committee for enquiry and the Sub-Committee would report to the General Committee. (Mr. Roffey) Although there may be only three meetings of the General Committee in the year, an enormous amount of opinions is obtained and forwarded to the General Committee by circular. I think during the last year I have sent out upwards of 150 circulars for the opinion of the General Committee. The difficulty is that members of the General Committee live days journeys from each other and therefore it is very difficult to hold meetings of the General Committee, but the opinions of the members of the General Committee can always be obtained by circular or letter if not at meetings.

F-2047. Let me take a particular instance, viz., the question whether or not a thumb print should be taken, or what is called a civil agreement should be used, when what is called the bonus of Rs. 12 is paid at the end of a year's service. Is there any common policy in your Association on that matter?—(Mr. Kilburn) Generally speaking there is no civil agreement at all, but it is quite a common practice to take the thumb print. That bonus follows on from the old agreement bonus, but at the present time it is considered in our part of the world to be a privilege to give a coolie that bonus; he has to be a good working coolie in order to get that bonus. It is given to him annually in consideration of work he is going to do in the coming year, and unless one is reasonably sure he is going to do that amount of work, there is no object in giving it to him. For instance, in my own individual concern, when a man has worked for 12 months, he comes up to the office and asks for the bonus; his record is then looked up, and if during the last year, which consists, say, of 313 working days, he has not worked 220 days, his absence being not on account of sickness or leave, he is told he cannot get the bonus because he has not worked up to that total of 220 days, that he can go on working and can have the bonus when he has worked that number of days. It is not necessarily given to him at the end of one year, but is given to him when he has completed 220 days of work.

F-2048. Now you are describing the practice on your own particular estate?—Yes, and, so far as I know, in Upper Assam that is the general practice.

F-2049. In the course of our investigations we have already come across three different practices in regard to that bonus.—There is a big variation; it is a very large area. We actually would much prefer to give that bonus say monthly to every man who has worked for 20 days during the month, giving him Re. 1 for the month, but the coolie much prefers to get a lump sum of Rs. 12 which goes towards buying cattle or jewellery; he says that if he gets Re. 1 monthly he never notices having it, and fritters the money away, but if at the end of the year he gets Rs. 12 and his wife gets Rs. 10, which is our custom, he gets a lump sum in his hand at one time and is able to buy cattle.

F-2050. But we are persuaded from some of our investigations that in the mind of the coolie there is an idea that this bonus involves some tie or obligation?—Quite so, and I should think that is perfectly justified; otherwise, why should he be given the money? If he is not going to do anything in return for it, why should he have it?

F-2051. You have been describing to us a system by which it is given for good work during the past year?—No; that is the qualification for getting it. He would not be given the money if he were not likely to do good work in the coming year; his past record is a guarantee for his future.

F-2052. But the three different practices which we have come across are these: in the one case taking what is called a civil agreement from the man on the payment of the bonus; you are aware that that practice exists?—I was not aware until very recently; I did not know that it did exist; I thought it had gone entirely.

F-2053. The second is the taking of a thumb print as a receipt for the money; is that done on your estate?—That is done on our estate; that is fairly general.

F-2054. And the third is where no thumb print is taken; the money is simply paid. We have come across those three different practices, and I am asking whether your Association has any common policy on a matter of some importance of that kind?—(Mr. McKercher) I do not know of one.

F-2055. The matter has not been discussed?—No, not to my knowledge. (Mr. Roffey) May I draw your attention to the local Government's Immigrant Labour Report for June 1926; in paragraph 6 it says this: "During the year Act XIII of 1859 expired. Both Commissioners agree that this has had no effect upon the industry, as the Act had long been dropping into disuse. In the Assam Valley only one agreement in 842 came into Court. The practice of giving advances continues, but they are given merely as bonuses, and upon the freedom of labour in Assam there is no longer any legal restriction."

F-2056. That is perfectly correct and we understand that; I am not at the moment dealing with legal restrictions but with the impression in the mind of the coolies generally. There can be no question from the evidence that we have already had that the impression lingers in the minds of the coolies that they are bound for a year by the acceptance of this bonus?—(Mr. McKercher) I think that is correct; I agree with that.

F-2057. And am I correct in saying that some coolies decline to take or do not ask for the bonus?—Yes, 25 per cent. in some gardens. It depends on the status of the coolie on the garden very frequently, but I should say 25 per cent.

F-2058. And they decline to ask for the bonus because they think it will have some effect in restricting their freedom?—I would not say that; they do not take it when they have land, or because they may like to work when they like and that sort of thing. I do not mean to say that they do not take an agreement when they intend to go away; permanent people who have possibly been on the garden 30 years say: "No, I am not going to take it," but the next year they may come and ask for it.

F-2059. But still it is quite clear that your Association has not made an endeavour to get a common policy?—No.

F-2060. You will appreciate that it probably has a substantial effect upon recruiting in the recruiting areas if the idea still lingers that there is a tie?—Yes. We have never had this brought up before; it has never come before the Association in my time.

F-2061. *The Chairman*: That is the very reason why I am suggesting that the usefulness of any employers' association to a large extent is in the opportunity to develop common policies for the good of the industry as a whole and not merely looking at the individual estates. Further, with regard to the question of recruiting, we have, of course, been paying visits to the recruiting areas and endeavouring to satisfy ourselves as to what the feeling is in the recruiting areas and what reason there is for the difficulty in recruiting and the reluctance to come to Assam. I take it that all of you, or most of you, could still do with much more labour than you are able to obtain through the present recruiting system; is that the case?—Yes.

F-2062. And we have found that there is still a feeling, in spite of the improvement of communications, that Assam is a country so far away that once people have gone to Assam they are lost. It may be an unjustified feeling, but there it is; it undoubtedly exists. Now it has been suggested that if everyone who came to Assam had the right of repatriation at the garden's expense after three years, that would make a very substantial difference to the feeling in the recruiting areas and greatly increase the flow of recruits, it may be so that there would be more wishing to come to Assam than you have room for. It is the case, I believe, with regard to emigration to Ceylon that there are more would-be emigrants than can be taken, and I suppose that is the ideal which you would like to reach in Assam?—I think that would be very excellent; subject to the opinion of the Association, I would agree to it.

F-2063. You would agree to it being a distinct established right of coolies, if at the end of three years they felt themselves unhappy and did not wish to settle, that they should be repatriated at the expense of the garden?—Yes: But what would happen after three years in the event of a strike? You would have a definite period; you would not have it so that if there were a

political strike or anything like that, the gardens would have to pay the fares of the whole labour force back to their home countries. There is a danger there. There might be a general exodus.

F-2064. I am well aware of a danger of that kind; I am only for the moment putting a broad proposition. There would have to be certain protective conditions so that it would not lead to a mere mass movement for a temporary reason. But speaking generally may I take it that if a system were worked out which gave that right to the coolie, you would be in favour of it?—Yes, personally I favour it.

F-2065. I understand that under the present system you do get a certain number of coolies sent up here who are so obviously undesirable that you yourself repatriate them after a few weeks?—Yes, on arrival. I will not say that happens very often. They are supposed to be medically examined in their country; occasionally we find some have been missed, or a man or woman is unhappy; it pays to send them back.

F-2066. You want to have a contented and prosperous labour force?—We want a happy labour force.

F-2067. And you want the system to be such that your agents in the recruiting areas could exercise much more discrimination than they do at present?—Yes, that would be a very good proposition.

F-2068. On the question of the feeling in the recruiting areas and the distance that Assam is away, can you tell us anything about the amount of correspondence there is between coolies on your estates and the people they have left behind in their country?—There is a considerable correspondence.

F-2069. Do you as managers take any interest in encouraging interchange of letters?—Yes, and the *baboos* also write for them.

F-2070. Have you ever considered the question of encouraging that by, for instance, providing the stamps, providing some body who was prepared to write letters, to facilitate and encourage inter-communication?—No, I cannot say I have, but the office staff do a lot of work of that description. We have not a special man for that; the coolie may have to pay a pice or two for it; I do not know anything about that.

F-2071. We had a case the other day of a man who had left his wife behind him, and in 11 months, except that he had sent Rs. 10, there had not been a single letter exchanged between the man and his wife, so he told us: that seems rather a long time?—It does seem a long time.

F-2072. *Colonel Garbett*: I have known several gardens where the managers do take particular interest in this subject. In my own garden we have a separate little building with a writer there ready in case any labourer wants to write to his relations.

F-2073. *The Chairman*: That is an exact illustration of what I am suggesting. It is not a fault which is peculiar to this Association of employers; it exists in other industries; it may be this Association is not being as useful as it might be because ideas such as we have just heard of are not brought forward for the advantage of all the others in the industry, and the Association does not achieve its full constructive possibilities unless that is done.

The witness: I will make a note of that; it is not an expensive item. (*M. Nicholls*) Letters and messages are also carried by *sardars* when they go back to their country to relatives to a very large extent.

F-2074. *The Chairman*: But having regard to the quality of the *sardars* that you send down, it is rather doubtful how far that is useful; no doubt it is the main channel of communication at present?—Yes.

F-2075. Take the case of maternity benefits; I observe that many gardens give very liberal maternity benefits; but, as far as you are aware, is there any common practice in your Branch?—(*Mr. McKercher*) We have had correspondence on that. They are given full pay for three or four months; it varies a little. The medical officer generally recommends what leave the woman should have; he sees her weekly or twice a week when he comes round and he gives the leave; the manager has nothing to do with the leave. That is the case in our own gardens, but I cannot speak for the other gardens.

F-2076. There is no agreed minimum benefit?—Yes, we passed a resolution recommending three months. (*Mr. Kilburn*) The general practice is to give much more than that. (*Mr. McKercher*) Four or five months is given according to the health of the woman.

F-2077. In that regard you have passed a general recommendation to your members as to a minimum?—(Mr. Raffey) On the 28th March, 1925, the following resolution was passed by the General Committee at a meeting: "That a minimum maternity benefit of three months full pay should be granted by all members of this Association."

F-2078. Since 1925 how far has that been carried out?—(Mr. McKercher) It is general so far as we know. (Mr. Kilburn) Most do better than the minimum. (Mr. McKercher) I think our average is 4 months; it all rests with the medical officer.

F-2079. Do you agree that the *sardari* system of recruiting is not very satisfactory?—In 1895 there were 154,789 acres of tea in Assam and the labour force was 194,661. To-day both the acreage and the labour force is three times what it was then.

F-2080. But in the memorandum submitted by your Indian Tea Association it is admitted, I think, that the *sardari* system of recruitment is very expensive and not very effective; I think the statement is made that something like one-third of the *sardars* do not return?—Yes, I agree.

F-2081. Then would you agree that the system to which you are restricted by law at the moment is unsatisfactory?—Yes.

F-2082. And you yourselves suggest that in the first place alongside the *sardari* system there should be an additional method of recruitment?—Yes.

F-2083. That is, recruitment by authorised and responsible agents who at the same time should be subject to the licence and control of Provincial Governments; that I think is your own suggestion in your correspondence with the Government?—(Mr. Kilburn) The system of *sardari* recruitment is satisfactory without the restrictions of Act VI; our objection is to the restrictions under Act VI, which are so unfair to Assam. *Sardari* recruitment without the Act as it is done by the Tea Districts Labour Association for the Dooars is entirely satisfactory while under the restrictions of Act VI Assam is entirely dissatisfied. A scheme which gives such poor results for such heavy expenditure is entirely unsatisfactory. There are agents established for supervising *sardars* and forwarding coolies. They cannot be treated as employment bureaux or anything of that kind; that is against the law. They are not allowed to do any propaganda work; that is against the law. Suppose a man has been on a garden, and wishes to return to it. After being some years on a garden he wishes to return to his own country. He returns to his own country and finds conditions in his own country are not what he thought they were, and then wants to go back to the garden on which he had previously worked; he is a voluntary emigrant. Except in Bengal and the Central Provinces, the only course open to the local agent is to wire to the garden asking them to send a *sardar* to recruit this man. That is an absurd proceeding and the waste of money is dreadful.

F-2084. I think I may say we are well aware of the extreme restrictions under the present law which are partly due to interpretations of the law by the Courts which stand now as binding legal decisions; but that confirms my suggestion that the present system is not satisfactory?—Exactly; it is not satisfactory; we are entirely agreed on that. It is not the system so much as the restrictions imposed by the Act. The system of *sardari* recruiting is proving entirely satisfactory to the Dooars though it is exactly the same system as the Assam system, except that in the one case it is under the restrictions of Act VI, while in the other case it is without any restrictions at all. The organization which supervises the Dooars recruiting is an organization built up by Assam, but it is not trusted to carry on the recruiting for Assam.

F-2085. Have any of you experience of this short-term recruiting for 6, 9 and 12 months which has been for the last few years chiefly from the Ranchi district?—Yes, there is quite a lot of it in Assam.

F-2086. In that case the coolie is guaranteed repatriation at the end of the term even if it is as short as 6 months?—Yes, and that includes the journey both ways.

F-2087. Why did you institute that system?—Because we were short of labour; we had to get labour to do the work; the other system failed to produce the labour.

F-2088. Have you any figures to show us what percentage of these short-term coolies claim what you promised: repatriation at the end of the term? Did they nearly all go back?—Practically all. They get a bonus and a free

journey backwards and forwards to their country. Having done the 6 months they think they might as well go back home and see what things are like at home, and then come back again to the same tea garden. From their point of view it is money for nothing; from the garden's point of view it is a very expensive form of labour and it would only be done under necessity.

F-2089. Does not that prove that if you had a general system of recruitment under which at the end of a reasonable time in which the coolie could get to understand the life and decide whether or not to settle, he could go back, that would be much cheaper to you than going on with this short-term recruitment?—(Mr. McKercher) Yes, personally we think so, but we are not in a position to reply on behalf of the Association. It has to be considered generally because the conditions are so varied throughout the Valley; but our own personal opinion is that we think it would be an excellent thing.

F-2090. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Can a man be a member of the Indian Tea Association without being a member of the Tea Districts Labour Association?—Yes.

F-2091. And can a man be a member of the Tea Districts Labour Association without being a member of the Tea Association?—Yes.

F-2092. The two are absolutely separate?—Yes, with regard to membership, there is no connection whatever.

F-2093. Is the Tea Districts Labour Association run for a profit in any way?—No; any surplus is refunded.

F-2094. So that nobody benefits by the high expense of recruitment so far as the Tea Districts Labour Association is concerned?—No.

F-2095. You say they have 42 agencies?—Yes.

F-2096. Are there many officials?—No. I have reckoned it out and establishment charges come to Rs. 18 per coolie.

F-2097. If any other organization were set up to take the place of the Tea Districts Labour Association and maintain 42 agencies, do you think they could do it for less than the Tea Districts Labour Association?—No, certainly not.

F-2098. So that so far as the expense is due to the Tea Districts Labour Association as a recruiting body, that expense would continue?—It must continue.

F-2099. Therefore the heavy expense of recruitment is presumably due to the restrictions that are imposed?—It is due to the small number of coolies per sardar owing to the restrictions under Act VI.

F-2100. We have been told by the oil people in Upper Assam and we have had evidence here that the coal and mining industries in Upper Assam recruit very much more cheaply than you do?—(Mr. Kilburn) I come from that neighbourhood; our gardens are situated between the oil-field and the coal mines. I have not the slightest doubt that the recruiting for the oil-field is considerably cheaper than that of any garden; that is due to the fact that the gardens contribute most of the oil-field labour and they get all the labour they require with practically no recruiting. The neighbouring gardens have to recruit very heavily to supply that labour. We have been victims of that; we have lost hundreds of coolies during the last few years to Digboi. It is not only the coolies employed directly under Digboi for whom they consider themselves responsible, but we consider they are also responsible for the coolies employed by contractors doing work on the Digboi Oil-field. They put out big contracts with contractors for building works and making roads, etc. In many cases the contractor comes along to do this work without any labour; the first thing he does is to recruit the necessary labour which he does by sending round and offering higher rates than the neighbouring gardens can offer. Naturally he can afford to offer higher rates if he is getting a good contract rate and has no importation expenses to pay.

F-2101. *The Chairman*: Then your recruiting expenses are spread over oil-fields and coal mines?—Yes, and we are populating the Valley. In the vicinity of Digboi there are thousands of acres of very good rice land under jungle, virgin land. My experience is that the ambition of the garden coolie is to become a settler on Government land; they try to achieve that ambition as quickly as possible. Digboi affords a very good starting point for them; they probably have friends or relations in the vicinity who help them to take up the land and can point out good land to them. While the coolie is building a house and cleaning the land he can get work at any time at Digboi for Re. 1 per day.

That suits the coolie very well. The coolies can work at Digboi and make money while they are getting established as landholders. We have hundreds of coolies passing through Digboi in that way; we keep on supplying Digboi with labour at an enormous expense. That is what we object to.

F-2102. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What happens to coolies who are taken away from your garden by a contractor, after the contract is finished?—I think they usually go on Government land; it is an exceptional thing for them to return to the garden on which they have been working before; that is the one thing they do not do. They may go to another garden or live on garden lands.

F-2103. Can another garden take them?—Yes, after a certain period.

F-2104. What is your experience with regard to the coal mines?—We have suffered in the same way with regard to the coal mines, though not nearly to the same extent because the coal mines do not have contractors working for them to the same extent. But the coal mines pay high rates and our experience has been that once a garden coolie has gone to the coal mines and earned these higher rates we cannot get him back. The coal mines are quite prepared to say. “We will not employ your coolies.” We communicated with the coal mines about this; I wanted some redress for this, and I suggested that these coolies should be transferred to the collieries. I did not want them back, but as they had left the gardens we asked the collieries to compensate us for the cost of recruiting them. They said: “No, we will not do that, but we will not employ them.” If we point out that a certain coolie of ours is working in the colliery, they say: “All right, we will stop his work.” But then the coolie goes to the saw mills or some other employment; he never comes back to the garden.

F-2105. As I understand, in the coal mines the miner working underground gets an average wage of about As. 12 a day, the man working above ground gets about As. 10 a day, while no woman can be employed in the coal mines. That means that the miner out of his As. 10 or As. 12 a day, as the case may be, has to keep his family. What is the attraction of the coal mine as against the tea garden?—The rates which you quote strike me as being low.

F-2106. I have before me a circular which is handed by the mining company to the *sardars* when they send them out to recruit?—Is that the minimum rate, because I am perfectly certain they pay much higher rates than those.

F-2107. It is attached to the statement that Mr. King sent in and I hand it to you?—That is the guaranteed minimum wage; the ordinary rate is higher than that. A new coolie coming up from his country is nothing like so efficient at work as a coolie who has spent years in a tea garden and is acclimatized and has more sense.

F-2108. Do you know whether the coal mines send out recruiting *sardars* to Bihar, the Central Provinces and the United Provinces?—I believe the Assam Railway & Trading Company are the largest importers of labour in Assam for any individual concern; they do import labour through the Tea Districts Labour Association, and also outside the Tea Districts Labour Association; they import a lot of labour from Karachi and that neighbourhood.

F-2109. When a *sardar* is sent away to recruit they evidently give him a printed note indicating the attractions of employment in the coal mines; you have in your hand a copy of that note. Do you do anything like that in connection with the tea gardens?—We give the usual question sheet, but nothing like that, not a printed circular. I consider this is a very good system but it is not done by the tea gardens.

F-2110. Do you not think it would be a good idea if you were to print suitable circulars and hand them to your *sardars*?—They might be printed in the vernacular of the recruiting district and would set out the attractions of the tea gardens?—I think it would be an excellent thing. (*Mr. McKercher*) Would that be regarded as propaganda?

F-2111. Not if the *sardar* took the circulars with him. If that were an objection, it would apply to the coal company as much as to the tea gardens. In a garden yesterday a man said he was paid As. 4 or As. 6; when the recruiting *sardar* tells the coolies in the recruiting district that that is all they will get in cash, I suppose the additional advantages which are given by the tea gardens to their coolies will not appeal to the coolie so much as As. 10 or As. 12?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) No, the tea industry seems to be peculiar in that respect.

F-2112. Were you under the impression that you could not do that because it would come under the head of propaganda and therefore would be objectionable?—So many things are open to objection under the Act.

F-2113. Apparently the coal mines repatriate their coolies after they have done 428 days work. Does that appeal to you?—Yes, I much prefer it to a period of time. We consider 220 is a fair number of working days in a year; it is about two-thirds of the number of days in the year.

F-2114. The 428 working days prescribed by the coal mines works out at about two years on the tea gardens?—Yes, but our efficiency is very low.

F-2115. Would it be a good thing if you repatriated at the end of a certain period of time and earlier if the coolie has done a certain number of days work?—I can only speak personally in that respect; it would have to be considered. (Mr. McKercher) I think that is a good idea.

F-2116. *The Chairman*: It is an alternative suggestion which might be considered?—Yes.

F-2117. We have had information here that one garden in what you call the question sheet refers to repatriation at the end of three years. That is an individual garden; it is not a common policy?—(Mr. Kilburn) We can hardly form a common policy because some gardens are very much more in need of labour than others, and a garden that needs labour very badly is naturally prepared to go further than other gardens. There are a few favoured gardens which are not particularly anxious to recruit labour and they are not likely to make the terms for recruiting so attractive as a garden which must get labour if it is going to keep going and produce its crops.

F-2118. But if you are to remove once for all the old impression in recruiting areas against Assam, it would be very desirable to have a minimum policy which applied all round to all recruits?—Yes.

F-2119. Any gardens then could do better than that if they chose?—(Mr. McKercher) I like that suggestion.

F-2120. *Sir Alexander Murray*: The present system of recruiting is so expensive that it has really broken down?—I would not say it has broken down; last year we recruited 73,000 souls.

F-2121. Can you give us any figures over a period of years to show what has happened to the coolies you have brought in?—There are 600,000 settled on Government land.

F-2122. Where do you get that figure from?—I got it from Shillong for the Simon Commission; it is the figure for 1926.

F-2123. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: According to the memorandum of the Government of Assam actual workers are settled on 159,000 acres.—(Mr. Nicholls) The amount of land held by labourers still on the garden books in the Assam and Surma Valleys is 166,229 acres.

F-2124. *Sir Alexander Murray*: I am talking of the number of people not on your books, who have left you?—(Mr. Roffey) The amount of land settled direct and as sub-tenants with ex-tea-garden-coolies is: in the Brahmaputra Valley 333,639 acres, in the Surma Valley 47,963 acres, making a total of 381,602 acres. That figure is taken from the Land Revenue Administration (Assam) Report of 1928-29, the current report.

F-2125. *Mr. Cliff*: When you gave evidence before the Simon Commission you said that half a million ex-tea-garden-coolies had been colonized?—That was speaking for the whole of Assam.

F-2126. The statement is: Apart from this, the industry has assisted in the colonization of the Province to the extent of half a million ex-tea-garden-coolies who have settled in the Province?—Yes, but I think the actual figure is 600,000. (Mr. Roffey) Paragraph 57 on page 39 of the Census Report says: "In the result I estimate that the total number of foreigners now in the Province on account of the tea industry is about one and a third millions, that is to say, one-sixth of the whole population of Assam." That is in 1921.

F-2127. *Sir Alexander Murray*: That does not take into account children born of those people?—(Mr. McKercher) No, and a large number have gone out since.

F-2128. Have you figures that will show us the number of people who came into Assam to the tea gardens within the last 20 or 30 years and how many are now employed?—(Mr. Roffey) The total number from 1885 to date is 2,294,143.

F-2129. Where have you got that from?—Between the years 1885 and 1905 I get 931,920 from the 1906 Labour Enquiry Report. For the years 1905 to 1921 the figures of 1,054,181 is obtained from the 1921 Labour Enquiry Report. The total for the eight years 1921 to date, 308,042, I obtained from the Immigrant Labour Reports of Assam.

F-2130. What is the net natural increase of population over the same period?—(Mr. McKercher) I think it is 12 per 1,000. I took the difference between births and deaths and put it at that figure. I learn now that Dr. McComb'e has calculated it at 7 per 1,000.

The Chairman: We are in the main concerned with the question how it has developed since the last enquiry of 1922. I do not think we want to review again what other people have done before us.

F-2131. *Sir Alexander Murray:* We have been told that the coolies are perfectly free to go from garden to garden. But I understand that you have agreed amongst yourselves not to recruit each other's labour. If a coolie who is recruited by A and employed by him goes to B what happens?—The coolie is perfectly free to go and there is nothing to check his movement. But what happens is that B pays a compensation to A to cover the cost of his recruitment.

F-2132. We went to a garden yesterday and we got proof, I am afraid, that the coolies did not consider themselves free to move like that?—That garden is not a member of our Association.

F-2133. Why have you this agreement amongst yourselves?—The Robertson Commission of 1906 recommended this.

F-2134. Does that explain why you have got this agreement?—(Mr. Kilburn) Owing to the excessive cost of importing coolies we have agreed amongst ourselves that the garden which incurs the expenses and imports the coolie should have the benefit of his services and that if another garden takes him away it should pay compensation to the garden which originally recruited him.

F-2135. *The Chairman:* I take it that this mutual agreement amongst yourselves was really to assist the free movement of labour?—Yes, that was so.

F-2136. So that amongst yourselves it is recognized that it is a fair basis?—In days gone by the custom was that if a coolie wanted to transfer from one garden to another, then another coolie must be transferred from the second garden to the first garden. It took a long time to arrange this mutual transfer and so this system was abolished and a cash compensation was fixed to be paid to the garden which imported the coolie in order to cover their cost of importation. This no doubt assists the free movement of the coolies.

F-2137. I have understood that the motive of the agreement amongst yourselves was to assist the free movement of labour?—(Mr. Roffey) May I just quote what the Robertson report of 1906 stated on the subject?—In paragraph 252 they say: "In the Dooars this is secured by voluntary agreement amongst employers, and the ideal would be to see a similar arrangement come to in Assam. From what the Committee learn, however, there seems no prospect of any effective voluntary agreement being adopted. They therefore put forward the suggestion that the Legislature should step in and secure what cannot be secured otherwise." Lower down in paragraph 254 they say: "Were there any possibility of the matter being arranged by agreement amongst the planters themselves the Committee would not have suggested its being legalized." In 1908 the Indian Tea Association, London, framed their labour rules and the Labour Rules agreement was first signed in 1910. Legislation was drafted by the local Government and approved by the Government of India in 1913. But it was rejected by the Secretary of State.

F-2138. *Sir Alexander Murray:* Under the old Act unless a coolie got a discharge certificate he could not get away from the garden. He used to be stopped at the ghats and the railway stations. Does that fear exist to-day?—(Mr. McKercher) No.

F-2139. Otherwise we do not understand why the coolies fear to leave the garden?—There are many coolies who leave the garden. (Mr. Kilburn) Regarding Dum-Duma I can give figures of the number of coolies who have left the garden which will show that no such fear exists.

F-2140. You have the family system of reckoning wages. But the coal mines, the oil-fields and other industrial concerns pay wages to the man sufficient for him to maintain his family. Have you anything to say on that point?—There is work available for women and children also on a tea garden but not in a coal or oil mine. When such work is available it is good for the labourer if he lives

with his family rather than live alone. It is a much better system and leads to health. There is for one thing less venereal disease when you do not have a large number of single men.

F-2141. *Mr. Ahmed*: You are in favour of removing all restrictions on the free movement of labourers and your Association is prepared to remove any restrictions if they still exist?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) At the present moment all the restrictions in Assam have been removed and they are concentrated in the recruiting districts.

F-2142. With regard to the Assam Labour Board have you any objection if a representative of the workers, any reasonable man, is put on the Board?—(*Mr. McKercher*) We do not want the Labour Board. It has served its purpose and cost us Rs. 25,00,000 in 14 years. (*Mr. Kilburn*) It is an unnecessary expenditure on recruiting.

F-2143. With regard to the roads on your estates, have you any objection to a representative of a union—not a political exploiter—passing through those roads?—(*Mr. McKercher*) Speaking personally I have no objection to a non-political welfare worker visiting my garden. I would personally welcome him.

F-2144. Representative of a trade union?—I do not mind that. I would welcome a non-political welfare worker.

F-2145. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Let us say a representative of an All-India Trade Union Organization?—On that point I agree with Mr. Withers entirely. I support every word of what he said.

F-2146. If a trade union organization recognized by Government sent up its representative what objection would you have?—I will have to consider that question.

F-2147. *Mr. Ahmed*: My friend Diwan Chaman Lall suggested yesterday that the roads in your gardens might be acquired by Government and made public property. What do you think of a step like that?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) Government cannot keep even their own roads in repair. Why do they want to acquire our roads also?

F-2148. Inspite of that you have no objection if a representative of a trade union passes along your roads with your permission?—No.

F-2149. What have you done to impart education to the children of the workers?—(*Mr. McKercher*) Most of the estates provide schools. The number of schools has been increased this year by 16 and attendance has increased by 483. The results are not encouraging due mainly to the objection of the parents to allow the children to go to school, because the children also are bread winners of the family. I cannot say that the coolie takes any interest in the education of the child. I may say in this connection that though Assam is 100 per cent. behind other provinces in the matter of general improvements, roads and funds it is only one per cent. behind in the matter of education.

F-2150. *Mr. Cliff*: In their memorandum the Indian Tea Association deal with working conditions, and with regard to wage rates they refer us to up-country associations. It says that "the work is so arranged that the minimum wage is obtainable for a matter of three hours work per day." Would you give me the minimum wage that is obtainable for three hours per day?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) The minimum wage in Dum-Duma is 8 annas for a man and 6 annas for a woman. In addition to that they are allowed 4 annas *titra* at any time of the year if they are prepared to do that, so that the actual wages are 12 annas and 10 annas. But that is not for three hours work.

F-2151. I understand that your wage standards are a little higher than the standards in the Valley?—Yes. (*Mr. McKercher*) In this district on light hoeing a man can earn his minimum wage in one and a half hours when the garden is clean and two hours when the garden is not clean. Deep hoeing will take a longer time. This must be left to the management because a lot depends on the class of work done by the coolie. After the coolie has finished this task he is given an extra task and he could do whatever he liked. We have the unit system here.

F-2152. I want to take an old standing labourer and see how much he earns in three hours in order to get a measure of minimum wage for three hours work per day?—This question of a minimum wage for three hours work seems to be very much of a phrase at the moment?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) In pruning the minimum wage is 8 annas a day. A man works 28 days a month and gets Rs. 11.8. I have figures of men drawing those wages.

F-2153. But is that 8 annas for three hours work?—A good coolie can complete the work in three hours.

F-2154. That is speaking generally. Take first of all an average old standing labourer. Can he do that in three hours?—Not in pruning but in light hoeing, certainly. Pruning is light work, but takes time. Light hoeing is quite easy work and they can do that quickly, more quickly in the beginning of the season when the garden is clean than later on. On light hoeing at any time of the year a man can earn 8 annas in three hours, and under.

F-2155. I have got deep hoeing, light hoeing, heavy pruning and light pruning, some of the things I have picked up. I want a fairly general statement of the kind of work a man can do to earn his minimum wage in three hours?—(Mr. McKercher) I have a statement here from each garden showing the wages earned by 10 best workers. I wrote to the managers and got this statement.

F-2156. My difficulty is this. I have been to several gardens and talked quite frankly with the managers. I saw some tasks rated at 6 annas which the managers have admitted to be 5 or 6 hours work. I have a lot of figures before me; but speaking generally at the moment I have seen no evidence to show to me that I can place any value on this statement which says that a minimum wage can be earned in three hours.—I calculated that a man will earn 1½ annas and a woman 1 anna per hour. We pay them, for one standard of pruning 2 pice a *nal* in the beginning and after they have finished the 4 anna worth of work we pay them 3 pice a *nal*. On that basis I said that the minimum wage could be got for three hours work.

F-2157. I see that men get paid at a progressive rate. But a practical man has got a basis with regard to his payment which he relates to time and I wanted to get this measure of minimum wage. You say that a man or a woman can earn 1½ annas in an hour?—On plucking they can earn 2 annas and more. May we put in a statement of the actual earnings of certain workers on the gardens?

The Chairman: Yes. (Statements put in.)

F-2158. *Mr. Cliff.* I was trying to get information in another valley but I failed to obtain it. Can you give us an approximate idea of the average duration of your labour force?—Some have been here for thirty-six years.

F-2159. What is the average duration?—(Mr. Kilburn) In our garden in one case without increasing appreciably the labour force we had, we found we had to import the total labour force in 10 years. That would come to 10 per cent. per annum.

F-2160. With regard to cost of recruitment you have stated before the Simon Commission that it works out to £20 per head at a conservative estimate and that you have spent thirty million pounds on recruitment. Do you accept those figures?—As an example of that in the case of one garden we imported 590 coolies including 166 short-term coolies for 6 months. The expenditure incurred was Rs 78,248, or Rs. 132 per head. That is in a good recruiting year including a large proportion of short-term coolies. These are our actual figures for one garden. (Mr. McKercher) It would be Rs. 260 per head including the *sardar's* commission, loss on *sardars*, etc.

F-2161. It is stated that "the colonization of the Province is the predominant factor in its development. Putting the cost of importation of labour at a conservative estimate of £20 per head the industry has made a contribution of thirty million pounds to the development of the Province." Is that statement a fact?—Yes, taking also into consideration loss of *sardars* and so on.

F-2162. At the present wage rates £20 a head represents the wages of a coolie for 20 months?—Yes.

F-2163. Having regard to the expenditure which the Tea Association incurs for recruitment may I ask whether it is proposed to go on recruiting on the present standard of life that obtains in the tea industry?—We improve them bit by bit every year. You must remember that the industry was in a very bad state. I came out in 1894. Since 1923 we have had some good years I cannot tell you what this year is going to be like.

F-2164. I know there has been a great deal of advance in the earnings. But as a matter of fundamental policy is the tea industry going to pursue the system of recruiting on the existing standard of life in the tea gardens, having regard to the expenditure which you incur on recruiting?—We would be very pleased to see an improvement in the standard of life.

F-2165. That I gather from many memoranda. The Government says that apart from physical welfare there is practically no welfare in the tea industry. Do you accept that fact?—What other kinds of welfare do you refer to?—We have some schools for the education of the children. Some gardens have cinema shows, sports and games like football.

F-2166. It is rather in a spirit of co-operation that I am putting it. I want to share the difficulties of the Commission with the practical planters on the spot. Government say, "It is impossible to introduce suddenly measures suited to the educated labour of other parts of the world. The ground must be prepared before the seed is sown. It is the preparation of the ground that at present demands the most attention." The planters say: We are up against one of the most difficult problems in the world; the obstacle to advancement is the labour force themselves. And the planters also say they would welcome welfare work. What I am anxious to find out for the benefit of the Commission is what is being done. Let us leave the question of hospitals and medical facilities. What is being done by the tea industry to tackle this almost super-human problem?—The first step is education and we have provided schools.

F-2167. You say as an Association that the first step is education. What is the character of the education that you think is necessary for the tea garden population. Have you any views on that?—I think we have to begin from the bottom with kindergarten work, games and so on. I have no other suggestions to make.

F-2168. I think it is claimed on behalf of Government and on behalf of the tea industry that in looking at the standard of life of the tea garden population the joint earnings of a family must always be taken into consideration. And it has been calculated that on an average a family may be taken to consist of one working man, a working woman and 3/10ths of a working child. I want to apply practical measures to the problem of education and ask you whether as a tea industry you are prepared to increase the rates of wages of the parents in order that they may not require the earnings of their children who may be left free to go to school?—(Mr. Kilburn) I do not think it is necessary. The coolies themselves will not increase their wages. The working efficiency in one garden is 54 per cent.; in the case of another 59 per cent.; and in the case of a third, which is a new garden and has a small labour force of 300, it is 70 per cent. The figures of absenteeism are 31, 30 and 11 per cent., which means that these people can earn in 3½ days per week enough money to suffice for their needs. Over and above that they have no ambition to earn. They are perfectly happy. The only people who have a desire to increase their wages and raise their standard of living are the youths between 15 and 18. They want to buy shoes, fine clothing, bicycles and so on. But the old coolie, if he has got his food and drink, is content. He is very happy to spend his time amusing himself in his own way and cultivating his garden. We do provide schools free of all charge. We do not ask Government even for the small allowance they give us. We erect schools ourselves and appoint school masters. But we find that the coolies are quite keen at the beginning, but gradually their interest decreases in the school and nobody attends it. We then start it again and after a period the same thing happens once more. That is the difficulty.

F-2169. That is a difficulty which the Commission has to take into account as well as the planters?—(Mr. McKercher) In one garden absenteeism accounts for an annual loss of wages of Rs. 22,131; in another Rs. 57,055, in a third garden Rs. 18,806 and in a fourth Rs. 22,070.

F-2170. Can I go back to my question and ask whether you are prepared to increase the earnings of the two parents in order to free them from relying on the earnings of the child so that he may be educated?—I do not think it would help the child going to school.

F-2171. Have the managers power to increase the rates of wages?—Yes, with the sanction of their Board.

F-2172. I will pursue the question with them. It is suggested that it is not necessary to increase the wages because of the fact that the garden population will not work all the time they might work?—Yes, certainly.

F-2173. In what way do you suggest that the problem can be tackled?—Increase their standard of living. But the difficulty is that with these old people their requirements are very limited and the more the pay the less the work they put in.

F-2174. You say that we must increase their needs. And most people say that the first step is education and education must begin with children?—Yes.

F-2175. Addressing ourselves to the adult population is it within the competency of the managers and have they the necessary qualification to take the immediate steps necessary of their own volition and within themselves?—Yes, the majority have. I have, for instance.

F-2176. What progress has been secured by the managers in securing an increase in the number of hours of work done by the coolie and improving his outlook?—There is no progress. It is going down. (Mr. Kilburn and Mr. Nicholls) Yes, that is so.

F-2177. Is it within the competency of the managers themselves—I am saying this in no insulting way at all—and are the managers prepared and qualified for the work of improving the outlook of the adult population and increasing their desire to work harder?—(Mr. Nicholls) I think it is. (Mr. McKercher) The managers are quite capable of doing that, but to get the coolies to do it is a different thing.

F-2178. That is the crux of the problem and a beginning must be made this year or the next year to solve that. What measures have your Association evolved for dealing with this?—Nothing except education for the present.

F-2179. I tell you my own view at the moment. I have formed the impression that managers themselves, apart from the active co-operation of people outside, are faced with a task which they cannot perform. I do not know whether you agree with that.—(Mr. Kilburn) I personally think there is no solution.

F-2180. You have spent a considerable amount of money, an almost unbelievable amount on recruitment. There have been answers to questions with regard to cost of recruitment. It does appear to me that a very large proportion of that cost has gone to individuals—*sardars* to wit?—(Mr. McKercher) The *sardar* gets Rs. 20 per head as commission.

F-2181. I understand he gets varying amounts?—But the average is Rs. 20.

F-2182. I have heard complaints that one garden in its anxiety to get labourers is out-bidding another and so on?—Yes, that might be done.

F-2183. What I am concerned with is that a very large proportion of the cost has gone into the pockets of a few individuals?—This is agreed. The *sardar* when he is in his country has 5 or 6 months without pay. He is on leave.

F-2184. It seems to me to be an uneconomic proposition?—(Mr. Kilburn and Mr. McKercher) It is not an economic proposition, we agree.

F-2185. We must make a beginning to improve the outlook of these people and better their standards. Much has been done with regard to their health and there is room for much to be done in many districts, that is admitted?—(Mr. McKercher) Yes.

F-2186. Would you be prepared to support a machinery, you might christen it what you will, but machinery there should be—designed to deal with the health, welfare and standard of living of these people, within Assam itself? Would you rather have control and regulation within Assam itself instead of the very elaborate system of control and regulation outside?—Personally speaking I would welcome it.

F-2187. Would your Association be prepared to consider this suggestion and tell the Commission whether as an Association faced with this problem they would be prepared for the establishment of a machinery within Assam itself to deal with the health, welfare and standard of living of the tea garden workers?—Yes, we would consider the suggestion.

F-2188. I see that your labour rules are designed to protect the manager from losing his labour from one garden to another. He has paid for his labour and has got to protect himself from losing it?—Yes.

F-2189. We find that the bazaar is the fruitful field of enticement?—Yes.

F-2190. And that within the bazaar itself you have many of the evils of the old *Arkatti* system?—Yes, that is the place.

F-2191. With regard to the labour that is free to move within Assam itself would it be possible to arrange that garden managers should be able to employ such labour only through recognized channels?—We asked for an Act like that. (Mr. Kilburn) That is one of the evils of Act VI. A new garden connected with another garden can borrow *sardars* and send them down recruiting, but an independent garden has no other source but to recruit from other gardens. That is the only source of labour for them.

F-2192. You see instances first of all of gardens themselves; if I may use a rough word, stealing another man's labour. Would you agree that no garden should employ labour which was in Assam itself except through recognized channels?—(Mr. McKercher) I asked for an enticement Act in 1926. A notification under Act VI is already in force in two districts in the Assam Valley and we cannot recruit labourers from those districts, while they are free to recruit from ours. We asked for an extension of the notification for the whole province, but it was refused.

F-2193. That is one side of the problem which the managers themselves have to tackle and see that they do not lose their labour. On the other hand there is the problem of the workers; they have to see that they are not enticed away by false promises?—(Mr. Kilburn) I do not think it is possible to work a system of that kind. There is so much of *fallu* labour (casual) in this province on which no garden has any hold. They wander in the bazaars and whenever they are in need of money they go to a garden and do some work. When they have sufficient money they leave the garden. If it is only a question of permanent garden coolies living on the garden it might be possible.

F-2194. Let us confine ourselves to garden coolies willing to reside permanently on the garden. Would it not be possible that such coolies should be employed only through recognized channels within Assam itself?—It would be a very good idea (Mr. McKercher and Mr. Nicholls) We should consider this.

F-2195. How much does it cost you per head for short-term recruits?—(Mr. Kilburn) Rs. 80 to Rs. 85 including travelling and other expenses.

F-2196. Why is that less than the total average of Rs. 160 or Rs. 180?—We do not pay the same commission for short-term coolies as for others. A *sardar* recruits nearly 30 short-term coolies, whereas he recruits only one ordinary coolie.

F-2197. The cost of recruitment approximates very closely to his earnings during the short-term?—In that case, yes. He earns 12 annas a day.

F-2198. *The Chairman*: The fact that in the case of short-term coolies one *sardar* brings as many as 30 coolies seems to bear out the suggestion I made at the beginning that if you held out a definite promise of repatriation at the end of a reasonable period, say three years, then one *sardar* would bring far more recruits than he does now and your recruiting cost would be considerably lowered?—I agree it would reduce the cost of recruitment, but the short-term coolies are not an economic proposition because they do not remain with us in the plucking season—May to October and November—when we would like to have them. (Mr. Nicholls) But short-term coolies are almost all of them males and it affects the sex proportion tremendously.

F-2199. *Mr. Cliff*: With regard to the activities of the Tea Districts Labour Association, do they circularize the managers?—(Mr. McKercher) Yes, a lot of money is spent on that. They circularize the gardens.

F-2200. I saw a note of one of the Tea Districts Labour Association agencies containing some general observations. It was an advice to the managers in sending *sardars* for recruiting. It said something like this: in sending *sardars* for recruiting it is well to bear in mind that there should be some security, that security of wife and family should not be regarded as enough, and that account should also be taken of his property and cattle. Has any of the managers present here received a circular from some officer signing for the Tea Districts Labour Association agency giving advice of that kind?—(Mr. Kilburn) It is entirely against the principle of recruiting. A man must have been some time on a garden in order to be able to acquire some property. The longer he has been on a garden the less successful will he be as a recruiter; the shorter the time he has been on a garden the more recent will be his connection with the village and the brighter will be the prospects of his recruiting.

F-2201. I am going to discuss it when we get the Tea Districts Labour Association before us?—(Mr. McKercher and Mr. Kilburn) We are on the committee of the Tea Districts Labour Association

F-2202. Has any of the managers present here received a similar note containing such general observations?—(Mr. McKercher) I think there is something wrong with that. Was it on Tea Districts Labour Association note paper and signed by the secretaries, because every circular will have to be signed by the secretaries?

F-2203. We will get that letter on Monday. It was on plain paper and the signature was illegible.—We would like to see that.

F-2204. With regard to the Tea Districts Labour Association agency, is it the practice that when a man has been recruited in a district you get advice from the agency with regard to the man's family and his relations and you are told that you can judge from that as to whether it is worth sending another *sardar*?—(Mr. McKercher) For the information of the manager, generally a note at the bottom of the recruiting form is made that the man has his wife or relations in his country.

F-2205. With regard to the tea managers themselves proposing schemes of welfare, I understand that the tea garden manager on the spot says to himself "well so and so would be a good thing" and then he sends up the proposal to the agents. I would like, if you do not mind telling me, to get an idea as to the willingness or otherwise of the agents to support their managers and the schemes that they have on hand?—(Mr. Nicholls) They are very willing indeed; they give their full support. (Mr. Kilburn) There is no obstruction from the agents.

F-2206. Suppose you want hospitals and schools, you get the support of the agents?—(Mr. Nicholls) Yes, their full support.

F-2207. Is the amount for this work charged to revenue or to capital?—(Mr. McKercher) It all depends upon the work. Formerly we were charging to revenue but since the last five or six years if it is an improvement of a permanent nature, we charge it to capital.

F-2208. What do you exactly mean by "a permanent nature"? Take the maintenance of a hospital; is that capital or revenue?—Revenue. I was referring to the erection of buildings.

F-2209. Suppose you build a school; is that capital or revenue?—It depends on the cost of it. If it were, say, Rs. 300 I should put it to revenue. All capital expenditure must go before the Directors.

F-2210. Maintenance of houses in good repair, is that revenue or capital?—Revenue.

F-2211. Suppose you build new houses?—It is capital. If, as I said, the cost for, say, the erection of a shed for a school or extension of a hut, is not very heavy we charge it to revenue, otherwise we place it before the Directors.

F-2212. Mr. Clow: Roughly, what is the dividing line on an ordinary estate?—My Directors have given me discretion to charge to revenue anything under Rs. 500; if it is over Rs. 500 it is capital. (Mr. Kilburn) I am not in the same position as Mr. McKercher. I always put it to the Board if I want to charge anything to capital.

F-2213. Mr. Cliff: It has been said that a margin of Rs. 500 has been left. Can we take it that that would be a fair dividing line for the whole of the gardens in your Association?—(Mr. McKercher) I cannot answer for all.

F-2214. Sir Alexander Murray: Do you get pay or commission; if commission, is it on the gross or the net earnings, so to speak?—On the gross.

F-2215. Excluding these capital debits?—Yes. (Mr. Kilburn) It is excluded in our case. (Mr. Nicholls) I do not receive any commission.

F-2216. Mr. Cliff. Is it the practice to have civil agreements on the gardens?—(Mr. Kilburn) Certainly not. (Mr. Roffey) What do you mean by civil agreements?

F-2217. While we were on a garden yesterday, there was brought to our notice a civil agreement which a man signs for a certain consideration; it is a stamped agreement to work for a certain period and which is liable to enforcement in a civil court?—I have very considerable experience, and I say that that is an exception; I have not seen one myself since 1915.

F-2218. The Chairman: We had another case where it had only been recently stopped. You do not endeavour to get uniformity in your Association on that point?—My firm represents, I think, 75-80 per cent. of the tea gardens in Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts for the last 60 years and I have never seen a stamped agreement paper in my office since Act XIII of 1859 was repealed.

F-2219. Do we take it that your Association is opposed to the continuance of the stamped agreements?—(Mr. McKercher) I do not quite understand what these agreements are.

F-2220. Sir Alexander Murray: It is practically the old agreement form under Act XIII without the penal clauses?—Yes, our Association would oppose the continuance of such forms.

F-2221. *Mr. Cliff*: When we were in Mr. Withers' gardens, Mr. Withers said that the wages given were sufficient for the present standard of life. I want to know whether your Association can help me. What does it cost for an adult man for food for a month?—I have got the figure of the cost of living for a family consisting of a man, a woman, a working child and an infant; it is Rs. 19-1-10. (*Mr. Kilburn*) I think we can put Rs. 5 for food only.

F-2222. We are going to the bazaar to-morrow morning, and if Rs. 5 is the accepted figure I would like to buy it myself in the bazaar. Do you say that Rs. 5 a month for an adult man is sufficient for his food?—Yes.

F-2223. Can you tell us the constituents of this Rs. 5?—(*Mr. McKercher*) I have not got that information here.

F-2224. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: In connection with the question of education which Mr. Cliff was asking you about, could you tell me whether it is a fact that, it would not benefit you to advocate compulsory education for the children on your plantations because that would rob you of the labour of those children?—I do not think it will affect us; on the other hand, it will improve the intelligence of the labour, and it would be very useful to us. Even now we give them facilities to attend our schools, but most of them do not take advantage of the facilities offered.

F-2225. I am not at the moment thinking of the existing facilities that are offered by you. But suppose it were advocated that there should be compulsory and free primary education on the tea gardens?—What about the villages outside?

F-2226. Let me, in the first place, take the question on your tea plantations?—I do not approve of the question being separated as between the villages and the tea plantations.

F-2227. Then let me take the villages also. Suppose the Assam Government decide upon a system of compulsory primary education, would I be correct or incorrect in stating that that would rob you of the labour of the children employed on the tea plantations?—Up to what age would you educate them?

F-2228. Let us say up to the age of 13 or 14?—Then it would certainly affect us. (*Mr. Kilburn*) The Government have already passed a Compulsory Education Act.

F-2229. This is what the Assam Government say in their memorandum: "Most of the children of school-going age supplement the family earnings and the loss of this additional income, necessitating perhaps a little more work on their own part, condemns the scheme in the eyes of a large majority." It was because of that fear that Mr. Cliff was asking you whether you would be prepared, if a scheme like that were actually introduced, to supplement the earnings of the man and his wife up to the extent of the loss caused to him by the loss of the labour of his children?—(*Mr. McKercher*) Our experience is that coolies are very much reluctant to send their children to school.

F-2230. *The Chairman*: Would it not be possible in any system to have school holidays to correspond with the period when there was most work on the gardens, that is, during the plucking season?—But the season extends over a period of six months. In any case, I doubt very much whether the coolies would ever allow their children to go to school.

F-2231. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: From the figures you have given us and also from the statement made by the Government it is clear that no progress has been made in the matter of education; the numbers of schools have declined and the numbers of school-going children have also declined. Therefore it seems to me that the only way out of the difficulty is for a compulsory scheme to be introduced. Let me repeat Mr. Cliff's question: Having the welfare of the workers at heart—let me put it that way—would you be prepared to supplement the earnings of these workers by the amount that they would thereby lose?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) If you increase their total income they would do less work again. (*Mr. McKercher*) They only work for 3½ days now, and if you increase their earnings, they would probably work for a less period.

F-2232. I will not go into the details of the reasons why you will not do it. My question is would you not be prepared to do it if the Government decided to take that step?—Personally, no; but if the Government decided to take that step, I think most of the parents would work more and thus earn more.

F-2233. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Generally at what age does a child do a man's work?—16 to 18.

F-2234. When do you employ children for the first time?—They are employed when they are 11.

F-2235. You will not object to their education up to 11?—Certainly not.

F-2236. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Children are employed before that age?—It depends on circumstances.

F-2237. You made a statement just now that increase in the earnings would lead to the lowering of the efficiency of the worker. The Indian Tea Association also in their memorandum say: "It is considered that increased earnings result in a lowering of efficiency." What do you exactly mean by the lowering of the efficiency of the worker?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) We were referring to the labour force in general and not to the individual.

F-2238. Can you give me the figures of absentees, let us say, at the time when the last increase in wages was given by you and the figures of absentees since then?—I cannot give you any figures.

F-2239. It seems to me that that statement of yours can be considered to be correct only if the figures for those periods are compared side by side?—(*Mr. McKercher*) For instance, in 1928 the price of rice was more than it is now; in 1929 there was a fall in the price due to good crops; in one garden only there was a difference of Rs. 6,000 on this account.

F-2240. But that figure hardly corroborates the sweeping statement that you have made. The only way in which it can be corroborated or contradicted is by a comparative table showing us the absentees before and after the increase was given?—I am afraid you will have to accept my experience.

F-2241. *Sir Alexander Murray*: In the 1921-22 report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee figures are given showing the percentages of attendance of the labour force; detailed figures are given on pages 32 and 33 of that report, but taking a round figure it comes to about 75 per cent. A moment ago you gave the figures as 50 or 65 per cent. Can you give us figures corresponding to those given on pages 32 and 33 of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee's report?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) The figure I gave is the actual for 1929; I was speaking for my gardens and not for the Association as a whole.

F-2242. Are the figures of 65 and 50 per cent, comparable with the figures given in the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee's report?—Our last increase of pay was given about 1925; we could compare the figures for the same gardens prior to and after the increase was given.

F-2243. What we would like is that the 1921-22 report should be brought up-to-date by actual figures?—That could be done. (*Mr. McKercher*) In the old days we had 20 absentees but now we get 200.

F-2244. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Can you tell me whether, since the increase of wages—a very small increase of wages that has been granted to the men—there are any statistics available to show that they are doing actually less work per man?—At the present moment we do require 1/4 coolie per acre more than we did before the improvement in wages.

F-2245. Could you give us any figures to show that?—I have not got them at present, but I can give them later on. Our absentees for the last few years have gone up from 30 and 40 to 250.

F-2246. Leave the question of absentees on one side for the moment. Let us take a good worker who was, let us say, getting Rs. 10 a month in 1921 and Rs. 12 in 1929. Is he doing less work to-day?—I would not individualize on any one man, but I might say that at the present time we require more labour to do the same work than we did in 1920 or 1921.

F-2247. But you are getting a very much bigger yield at the present moment?—That is largely due to manuring.

F-2248. *The Chairman*: Is not part of the decrease due to the increase of khet land?—Yes; if they have more khet land they will do less work on the gardens.

F-2249. It is not strictly absenteeism; the men may be doing less work for you and more work for themselves?—That is so.

F-2250. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: If a man finds it more remunerative to do work on his own little plot of land than on the tea estate it is natural that he will devote more time to his own work. So that efficiency qua increase in wages resulting in less work is not necessarily to be gathered from the figures of absenteeism?—Why?

F-2251. For the simple reason that your increase in wages may not be as much as the increase that he would get by working on his own little plot of land. If a man finds that by working on your estate his earning is 4 annas but by working on his own little plot of land he gets 5 annas obviously he would utilize his spare time on his land rather than on your estate; but on the other hand if he finds that he can get more on your estate than on his own land he will naturally spend more of his time on your estate. So that if it is shown that he is making more out of his own little plot of land than he is making on your estate, and that is coupled with the increase in absenteeism, would it not prove that this absenteeism is a factor which shows that he is working harder to get more money and not working less because he is getting more money?—No. (*Mr. Kilburn*) *Khet* work is only seasonal.

F-2252. I am putting a hypothetical proposition?—(*Mr. McKercher*) I cannot follow that because I do not agree with you.

F-2253. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Is it not a fact that he will work on his *khet* land whether it gives him 4 annas or 5 annas?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) That is so. Putting in more work does not mean an increase in crop.

F-2254. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: The Indian tea planters at Jalpaiguri in their memorandum state that there has been a slight increase in efficiency. You do not agree with that statement?—(*Mr. McKercher*) If you take the Government records, the attendance of work for last March, I think, on some gardens was 19, while in September it was 16; you will find that from the Government returns.

F-2255. I am only pointing out to you that you have used the word "efficiency" and they have also used the word "efficiency"; and they say that there has been a slight increase in efficiency?—My experience is that if you have more *khet* land you have more absentees.

F-2256. You base efficiency on the question of absenteeism?—Yes.

F-2257. Could you give me a rough idea of the land tenure system under which you have obtained these estates from the Government?—(*Mr. Roffey*) There are several forms of grants; some are fee simple grants, some are 30 years leases, some periodic leases and some annual leases.

F-2258. Have you to pay anything for the fee simple grants that you get?—We pay the local rate.

F-2259. Out of these lands that you have got, you have given out certain lands to the workers on your tea estate who are tenants-at-will?—Not necessarily; they may be annual tenants.

F-2260. They have not entered into agreements?—Some have.

F-2261. But the majority of them?—(*Mr. McKercher*) They are supposed to have given a chit that they would pay one rupee rent.

F-2262. Yesterday on one tea estate the manager said that he was gradually reducing the area that he had allotted to a particular worker on the estate; that is to say, when one man has broken the soil and prepared it for his paddy it is the manager's discretion whether to relieve him of that particular plot at any time he chooses, or to reduce or increase it at any time he chooses?—I should not like to do that at a time when I knew it would affect the man's family earnings. But if a man did anything wrong, say, this year, I should exercise my option of getting him rid of his land early next year.

F-2263. The manager about whom I was talking is a manager of a very big tea estate here and this is what he told us from which I conclude that his statement must obviously be correct that it is at the discretion of the manager or of the proprietors of the tea plantation to give or to take away and that there are no tenancy laws that apply to these people?—I do it in another way. As I said, more *khet* land means less work on the tea estate. We are short of *khet* lands for the number of labourers. The old men who started 20 years ago have got rather a big holding; normally they have anything below one acre. If it is anything over one acre they pay a higher rate; I think it is Rs. 4-4 or Rs. 4-8 an acre.

F-2264. The point that I was driving at is about the security of tenure of these labourers who are given this *khet* land. There is no tenancy law that applies to them?—(*Mr. Roffey*) There is no special tenancy law.

F-2265. Most of the workers on your tea plantations come from those parts where they do live under the rule of tenancy laws?—That I cannot say. I do not know what tenancy laws there are in other provinces.

F-2266. Would you be in favour of a tenancy law because it seems to me that it is a difficult process for a man to break in a plot of land and prepare it for paddy and then to have to face sudden dismissals from that plot of land?—(Mr. McKercher) It is not done.

F-2267. If it is not done, then you can have no objection to have some law in that respect?—(Mr. Kilburn) The necessity does not arise.

F-2268. The necessity obviously does arise because the evidence given to us shows that it is the sweet will of the manager to take away or to decrease the acreage that he leases to a particular individual?—It will be very foolish of him to do that.

F-2269. The fact is that it has been done. Would you be in favour of legislation to prevent that sort of thing happening?—(Mr. McKercher) I do not want any legislation.

F-2270. *The Chairman*: Where a man has developed more land than you think he should have because you desire, with the amount of land available, to distribute it amongst the largest possible number of workers, do you provide him with any compensation when you take back from him a part of the land that he has developed in order to let it to another worker?—I have never taken back the land when once it was given. As I said, if one has more than one acre he pays a higher rate; I think it is Rs. 48. (Mr. Nicholls) When land is given for cultivation for the first time, the man does not pay rent for three years.

F-2271. You think he has had his compensation having got the land free for three years?—Yes. (Mr. Roffey) May I point out that when Government gives land on lease for a year and takes it back at the end of that period, the tenant does not get any compensation in respect of the land except the cost of the buildings that he may have erected on the land or the trees that he may have planted. You may ask the Deputy Commissioner for confirmation of my statement.

F-2272. *Diwan Chaman Lall* You have made a statement in your memorandum that the strikes which took place a few years ago in Assam were the outcome of political propaganda. Do you mean to imply by that statement that there were no economic causes which led to the strike of 1921? Let me refer you to the statement made by the Government of Assam in their memorandum. They say: “There was on the one hand a serious depression in the tea industry which crippled the resources of all but the wealthy companies, and curtailed the work and in consequence the wages which could be earned.” Would you agree with me that the reduction in wages caused acute economic distress?—(Mr. McKercher) I think there was famine then and the prices of foodstuffs rose. But all the same the strike, I think, was more political than economic. I think even the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee attributed it largely to political propaganda.

F-2273. You do agree that there was acute economic distress?—Not acute. The cost of living went up, but I do not think the wages went down. The wages might have been curtailed in one or two cases but not in all cases.

F-2274. You do not agree with the Government statement?—If you read the Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee you will find the whole thing laid out there.

F-2275. *The Chairman*: It seems to have been admitted that there was a certain amount of loss in actual earnings?—There was a certain amount of hardship, and we raised the earnings; there was an increase and not a reduction in wages.

Diwan Chaman Lall: May I qualify that by saying that there was economic distress?—

Sir Alexander Murray: The Enquiry Committee of 1921-22 say in their report that the unrest was due to a combination of economic and political conditions.

F-2276. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Dealing with dietary you say that it is bound up with caste questions. What exactly do you mean by that?—(Mr. Kilburn) Some castes will eat meat; other castes will not.

F-2277. How would that prevent giving them a better type of food, or rather giving them more food value? Is that a difficulty in the way of increasing their wages or providing better facilities?—No.

F-2278. So what you have made is a general statement?—Yes.

F-2279. You would agree with me that if the workers had better wages and better conditions of life on the tea estates, it would increase their efficiency?—I think it has increased the efficiency individually, but speaking for the labour force as a whole it has decreased the efficiency because they do less work. (*Mr. Nicholls*) The cost of living is low. (*Mr. Kilburn*) When the cost of living goes up I know I will get better efficiency and better attendance.

F-2280. *The Chairman*: Have you taken any steps by way of shops organized by yourselves on your estates to increase the demand for little luxuries and comforts?—In my garden I started a two-days Kali Puja show which is now being run by the workers themselves, the estates contributing.

F-2281. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Can you tell me whether the recruiters keep a register showing the names of depositors and the amount deposited with them?—(*Mr. McKercher*) No.

F-2282. You make a statement in your memorandum that large sums are remitted through recruiters. Have you any record to prove that? How do you make that statement?—I have a record here showing that Rs. 1,069 were remitted during the course of six months by the coolies who were recruited for two years; these coolies worked for one year and then went home. The records were kept personally by the manager subsequent to a complaint that money-orders were not being acknowledged by the payees.

(The statement was handed in.)

F-2283. Roughly, what will be the number of workers who sent that amount?—You can count it from the statement.

F-2284. I see from the statement that the usual amount sent is Rs. 4 to 5?—One has sent Rs. 50.

F-2285. Yes, but the usual amount is Rs. 4 to 5. Would you consider this a very large amount after six months' work?—It depends on who is sending it.

F-2286. As regards the *large* sums that they remit through recruiters, I take it that you have no record?—No.

F-2287. It is a general statement without any figures or facts to prove it?—(*Mr. Roffey*) I have some figures. Hundred new coolies who arrived in January, 1929, sent to their homes Rs. 1,650 from February to November, 1929. I also have further figures that about 20 short-term coolies sent Rs. 271 in the six months from February to September, 1929.

F-2288. These you consider large sums?—That is a matter of opinion.

F-2289. You make a statement in your memorandum that "Work is so arranged that a minimum wage is obtainable for a matter of three hours work per day, thus leaving ample leisure for private cultivation and relaxation such as fishing, woodcutting, etc." Do you consider woodcutting on the part of a worker as relaxation?—(*Mr. McKercher*) He might be selling that wood.

F-2290. With regard to inspections, do you consider that the method employed for inspections of your tea gardens is satisfactory?—I am scarcely in a position to judge.

F-2291. I have got a statement here that in six districts out of 274 of the plantations 256 were not inspected during 1928?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) They are inspected every two years by Government. (*Mr. McKercher*) If you are on the black list then inspections are done more often than is the usual case.

F-2292. Would you recommend a better system?—No; it is not necessary.

F-2293. Would you recommend some system whereby there may be some control over the planters and their relationship with the workers?—In what way? Could the District Magistrate take any action, apart from the Indian Penal Code, if they found that the conditions of labour were not satisfactory?—They could.

F-2294. What law is there which could compel any District Magistrate or any outside agency to take that action and make that action mandatory on you?

F-2295. *Lt.-Colonel Garbett*: Is it not a fact that when the inspection of a garden has taken place either by the Deputy Commissioner or by any other authority, the man who inspects the garden writes a report on it and submits to the Government?—That is so. (*Mr. Kilburn*) Under Act VI, the Deputy Commissioner has wide powers to suggest drastic improvements.

F-2296. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Is it not a fact that in the event of any trouble between a garden coolie and an employer in Assam, the District Magistrate sends a report to the Government of Assam who in turn send it to the Government of India?—(*Mr. McKercher*) That is so.

F-2297. Is there any industry in other parts of India where conditions are more carefully watched than in Assam?—We do not think so.

F-2298. *Divan Chaman Lall*: Do you know how many cases have taken place during the last year?—(*Mr. Roffey*) From the emigrant reports for the last seven years you will see that there were nine complaints by coolies of managers using force against them and all those complaints were not found true.

F-2299. Would you be in favour of action being taken by, let us say, a trade union organization in organizing tea plantation coolies in order that there should be better contact both with Government and public opinion, and also with the employers, regarding their conditions of work and employment?—(*Mr. McKercher*) You are dealing with an inflammable material and, I think, more harm is likely to cause than any possible good.

F-2300. If a trade union organization were set up and it considered that the wages paid were very low and demanded an increase in wages and represented the matter to you and fought the matter out with you and obtained an increase in wages, would that be a harm to you or to the workers?—I have had no experience except the political experience.

F-2301. You are averse to the utilization of the ordinary civilized method of collective bargaining between the workers and the employers?—If four or five of my coolies were to come and complain to me of anything, I would certainly look into it.

F-2302. Yes, but you yourselves as tea planters are against the method of collective bargaining between the employer and the employees?—At the present time, seeing their condition of literacy, yes.

F-2303. You are against the free combination of the workers into a trade union?—It is impossible.

F-2304. I never asked you whether it is possible or impossible, but are you in favour of it?—Under the existing conditions, no. I consider the labour is not educated to that extent.

F-2305. You are against it?—I am very much against it.

F-2306. Even if the Government of India ratified a convention in regard to this matter and are in honour bound to carry out the mandate of that recommendation?—I suppose, in due course, with the spread of education it will come. I would not object to that then.

F-2307. Under that ratification the Government of India have to take certain steps. And they cannot take those steps if they find that there is this objection on your part to a free combination and collective bargaining on the part of the workers in regard to their conditions of employment. You would not assist the Government?—No

The Chairman: I am not sure that you are rightly interpreting the convention.

F-2308. *Divan Chaman Lall*: If legislative action is taken by the Government of India to make it penal on the part of any employer to object to the formation of a trade union on the tea plantations, what would be your attitude?—The Government of India would make enquiries.

Mr. Cliff: The witness is claiming for the tea plantation community something that has never occurred in any other country in the world.

The Chairman: All they mean is that they would use their influence against such legislation.

Mr. Cliff: I am not thinking of legislation, but of trade union before there was education.

F-2309. *Divan Chaman Lall*: You will see that in other countries trade unions were formed in spite of the fact that the workers were not educated?—My past experience has been otherwise.

F-2310. *Colonel Russell*: On different estates apparently different types of houses are built for the labourers and improvements are being made in the structure of these houses. Can you give us any idea as to the types that you think advisable or most suitable for the coolies in regard to health and so on?

—(Dr. McCombie) There is the ordinary type with thatched roof and mud and plaster walls; I have no objection to that type at all as a house for a coolie provided it is kept in repair; it is a perfectly good healthy house and such a house as the coolie would build for himself. The type of house which I prefer, because it does not require to be kept in repair, is the one with iron framework brick walls and corrugated iron roof, with the proviso that the corrugated iron roof must be covered with a layer of thatch. It is because it often has no layer of thatch that the brick house with the iron roof is very often considered to be unhealthy.

F-2311. The memorandum of the Indian Tea Association refers to a difference of opinion among medical officers on this point?—I think some medical officers consider that the brick house with the corrugated iron roof is unhealthy, and I agree it is if it is not covered with thatch which prevents extreme variations in temperature.

F-2312. Supposing the roof were made of asbestos, would you thatch the asbestos?—As a matter of fact, I think they are rather hot, but thatching would obviate that objection.

F-2313. I suppose the chief constituents of the diet of the coolies are rice and *dal*?—Yes.

F-2314. Are these supplemented by other articles?—Yes, they have vegetables which they grow themselves; they use spices, onions and of course mustard oil is a very necessary ingredient. Certain types of coolies eat eggs with it. The jungly types of coolie use any kind of meat that happens to be available.

F-2315. Can you give us any information as to the amount of milk that is consumed by the coolies and their children?—I have no exact figures, but my impression is that the milk supply is occasionally rather on the short side for the children.

F-2316. I do not know whether you have any experience of the ordinary districts in India, but would you say that the milk supply in the tea plantation areas is a larger supply per head?—Yes, I should think so, on account of the number of coolies that keep their own cattle.

F-2317. They do use the milk that they get from their own cattle?—Yes.

F-2318. *The Chairman*: For how many gardens are you responsible and what is the area you cover?—17 gardens, and the area I cover is about 40 by 10 miles.

F-2319. Are those 17 gardens all under one agency?—No, they are under four or five agencies; there are one or two private gardens.

F-2320. Do they combine to employ you?—I am engaged separately by each garden, as a matter of fact there is no association; I made my terms separately with the various agencies in the various gardens.

F-2321. And what is the population?—I am dealing with about 30,000 coolies I think.

F-2322. What is the length of your experience?—25 years in Assam.

F-2323. *Colonel Russell*: I take it you have a more or less standard diet for the hospitals?—Yes.

F-2324. Could you give us details of that with the cost per month per head?—I can give you the diet more or less, but I have not the figures of cost.

F-2325. You could send that information to us?—Yes. The cost of my hotel charges comes to about Rs. 5 a month.

F-2326. It is said in the memorandum of the Indian Tea Association that as regards conservancy little progress is recorded. Do you adopt any principle in getting gardens to build latrines or do conservancy work?—I have tried on two of my gardens to establish a latrine system in the lines. It has been an absolute failure in both cases. When it was first started the manager and the assistants were keen, the coolies were very strictly watched, and the latrines were used to a certain extent; but gradually, as the keenness evaporated the use of the latrines became less.

F-2327. What type of latrines were they?—In most of my hospitals I have got septic tank latrines and those are the only latrines I can get used.

F-2328. Do you think latrines to which septic tanks were attached would be used on the ordinary garden?—No, I have tried them but they have not

been used by the coolies. In another garden I am trying portable latrines with the deep pit. Each day the pit is filled up with a certain amount of earth and when the hole is filled up we remove the latrine to another place.

F-2329. That is simply an earth privy?—Yes.

F-2330. You do not recommend that type, do you?—No, I do not.

F-2331. How are the water-supplies ordinarily obtained on estates?—Every estate has got a protected water-supply. The usual thing is a well which is covered in; the water is pumped up to a tank and is distributed to the lines by pipes. There is usually one well and a tank and a set of pipes for each lines. That is one system I have; in another garden we have a large well in the tea house compound with two large overhead tanks and the water-supply is piped to all the lines. What I am advocating now is the deep tube well, which, as you all know, gives an absolutely unpolluted and inexhaustible supply. I am sinking one such well now and I have two gardens where there are such wells. That to my mind is the ideal water-supply; it is not necessary to purify that supply as it is unpollutable. The well goes down 200 or 300 feet; it is practically an artesian well and one can get a supply of 8,000 or 9,000 gallons a day.

F-2332. What does a tube well cost?—Sinking the well costs about Rs. 8,000, but you have to add to that the cost of the tanks and the pipes. The last estimate for one of my gardens which has rather scattered lines is about Rs. 30,000 for one well. The area of that garden is about 800 acres with a population of about 3,000.

F-2333. I take it that in some gardens you still do not have a protected water-supply?—No, every garden has a protected water-supply.

F-2334. With regard to general diseases I think you have some statistics which will be of use to the Commission. Do you estimate your sickness by taking the incidence of individual diseases such as malaria and hookworm as separately or do you estimate the health of an estate by the general diseases figure?—By the total sickness figure and total mortality.

F-2335. Can you give us any figures comparing the Provincial with your garden birth and death rates, and the incidence of diseases like bowel diseases, fevers, infantile mortality and so on?—I have some figures here; they extend from 1911 to 1925. They are all taken from the Assam Sanitary Reports which give the Provincial mortality including the tea garden statistics and the tea garden statistics separately. I have also figures for my own practice which, as far as I know, are perfectly accurate.

Colonel Russell: I think it will save time if you will send in those figures.

F-2336. *The Chairman*: Do you agree with the figures presented to us by the Tea Planters' Association in their memorandum?—Yes.

F-2337. How is the still birth rate dealt with?—In the Government figures still births are not shown at all either as births or deaths and on the estates we do not show still births.

F-2338. Do you not regard the figures of still births as a very useful indication of the general health of the population?—Yes, I do; I think they should be shown separately.

F-2339. *Colonel Russell*: Have you any figures showing the natural increase of the population in the Assam tea population?—Yes, my graph shows that in 1911 in the Province the births were more than deaths by 6 per thousand while in tea gardens the birth rate and death rate were equal. The chart is rather vitiated by the appalling epidemics of influenza which caused a great decrease in the population; but in 1920 we find that the tea garden natural increase of population was steadily going up while that of the Province remained about the same. The tea gardens lines on the graph meets the Provincial line in 1922 and since then we have exceeded the Provincial rate; we are now 2 per thousand above the Provincial natural increase in population. In 1911 we were 6 below the Provincial figure while in 1925 we were 2 per thousand above, and, although I have not got the figures since then, I am certainly convinced that that increase has been maintained.

F-2340. *The Chairman*: Do you regard that as an indication of a substantial improvement in the health conditions in the gardens?—I do.

F-2341. *Colonel Russell*: Have the gardens in your area done anything in connection with the training of midwives and *dais*?—We have realized that it is useless to try to train the old traditional midwife; but we are trying to

get hold of their daughters who continue their mothers' profession; we are having them trained at St. Luke's Hospital, Chabwar, where they take a three months' course at the expense of the gardens and are sent back to the garden. Then they are attached to the hospital under the Indian doctor, attend cases in the lines and in their spare time are used as nurses in the hospital.

F-2342. In your experience has the use of these midwives been of benefit to the mothers?—It is very difficult to estimate the results because it is rather in the experimental stage at present.

F-2343. What do you think the Indian Tea Association mean by the references in their memorandum to the idiosyncrasies of the labourer, first in connection with infantile mortality, and, secondly in connection with the use of midwives and *dais*?—I think they mean exactly what they say, that the coolies do object to having midwives of a different caste attending them; it is therefore very difficult to train up enough midwives on the garden to be acceptable to the coolies. I mean, you may train a midwife and then find that a certain class of coolie will not employ her and stick to their own *dais*.

F-2344. The memorandum states that cholera is endemic in Assam; do you agree with that statement?—No, I do not agree with that; I think it is imported.

F-2345. Then how do you prevent the importation of cholera into Assam?—I think that is one of the best things Government did for us; they introduced compulsory cholera inoculation in 1919, when a large number of famine stricken and infected coolies were imported into Assam and there was a serious outbreak on the way up. The incidence in that year was 82 per thousand, which is colossal. Then the Government took the matter up and it is now compulsory for every coolie to be inoculated for cholera in the dépôt before he leaves. My figures show that since then cholera has practically disappeared from Assam. I certainly have not seen a case of true cholera for years. I might explain that a lot of diseases classified under cholera are really choleraic diarrhoea and not due to the cholera bacillus.

F-2346. It is also said in the memorandum: "Malaria is prevalent, but everything possible under the circumstances is being done to mitigate its ravages."—The best attempt to deal with malaria was made by the Doom Dooma Company who obtained the assistance of Sir Malcolm Watson who laid down a scheme which is being carried out. The results up to date of that experiment have not been particularly satisfactory, I understand, and anti-malarial work in our district is rather hung up awaiting more definite results of the Doom Dooma experiment.

F-2347. Is that not perhaps due to the fact that the study of malaria is a special subject requiring special experience and training, and busy doctors like yourself have not the time to devote to anti-malarial work?—I agree. As a matter of fact, I have a scheme under consideration at the present moment and I am trying to carry on a propaganda work at home among the leading people in connection with tea. The scheme is that we should have here attached to the Tocklai Station of the Indian Tea Association a malarial bureau, which would consist of a director, an expert malarialogist, an entomologist, and what one might term a malarial engineer, that is a man who has had great experience of drainage works in anti-malarial operations. We then have a central authority here on malaria. Any garden that wished to obtain any anti-malarial advice and could not go to the very great expenditure of the Doom Dooma Company would apply to the bureau; the anti-malarialogist would then go to that garden and make a mosquito survey and with the engineer would lay out a scheme of drainage and anti-malarial work with estimates. When the work was in hand they would be in constant touch with it; they would have reports of spleen, sickness and fever rates. If they found the garden was not responding to the treatment by showing a decrease of malaria, they would at once go and investigate.

F-2348. So that it comes to this, that for what might be termed preventive work a separate organization is required?—Yes.

F-2349. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You would set up a malarial research station on the lines of the research work which is at present being carried on at Tocklai in connection with land and plants?—Yes.

F-2350. *Colonel Russell*: Do you agree with the statement in the memorandum of the Government of Assam: "Dr. Jameson is of opinion that hook-worm is mostly contracted on the garden"?—Not entirely; a lot is imported; that is shown by examination of the stools of imported coolies.

F-2351. We have found in various gardens a considerable amount of hookworm?—It is very prevalent; about 80 per cent. are infected though not necessarily showing signs of the disease. It resolves itself to a question of conservancy; if one could get coolies to use latrines hookworm would disappear.

F-2352. So that you agree with the statement in the Government's memorandum as to the necessity of introducing conservancy systems?—Quite.

F-2353. The Government memorandum says: "Many of the labourers and their dependents arrive from their country in a very poor condition but they are treated carefully and given no work or only light work until they have recovered their strength." How do you deal with coolies of that class?—I see all new coolies on my next visit after their arrival; if they are obviously debilitated, under-fed or ill clothed, they are kept in the hospital or fed in the hotel and they get suitable allowances of clothing and money before they are sent away to the lines until they are in a better condition.

F-2354. What proportion of the imported coolies arrive in such a condition?—Speaking very roughly I should think about 5 per cent.

F-2355. The Government memorandum says: "In some of the smaller or newly opened estates the hospital accommodation is inadequate and in a few only untrained compounders are in charge." How many would be indicated by the word "few"?—I do not think it occurs in Upper Assam; it usually occurs in places where there is a small out garden with 100 or so coolies; but they are trained compounders; they may not actually be qualified but they have been trained.

F-2356. I think some of the compounders we have seen might easily be called untrained?—Yes, and these compounders are always under supervision from the central hospital.

F-2357. But in the smaller or newly opened estates would they be attached to a central hospital?—Possibly not.

F-2358. Do you recommend that they should be?—I certainly recommend that fully qualified compounders should be employed.

F-2359. Do you recommend that groups of gardens should be arranged so that there should be for each individual group a central hospital properly equipped and well staffed to which patients should be sent from the outlying stations?—Certainly, but the garden hospital should not be abolished. The central hospital should be reserved for serious and observation cases.

F-2360. The Government memorandum says: "Unhealthy gardens are also inspected by the Civil Surgeon every year until they obtain a cleaner bill of health." Would you not prefer that a public health officer should be substituted for the Civil Surgeons?—Yes, I think we might have a more regular system of inspection from the health point of view.

F-2361. As you know, the Civil Surgeon has usually little experience of public health work?—Yes.

F-2362. Would you prefer to have a trained public health officer coming round and advising instead of the ordinary Civil Surgeon?—Yes, I think I would.

F-2363. *The Chairman*: How does it come about that the Government medical officer takes no notice of the large population on the tea gardens? Apparently he has no responsibility?—None whatever. Under the old Act VI the Government retained a right of inspection of any garden in which the death rate was over 7 per cent.; the Civil Surgeon could then come in and make recommendations which had executive effect. Apart from that there is no regular inspection of tea gardens by the Civil Surgeon as a health authority. There is a regular inspection by the Deputy Commissioner or the police officer which they have every two years, but that is not necessarily from a health point of view.

F-2364. There is no inspection by the Medical Officer of Health except in the case of unhealthy gardens?—Yes.

F-2365. Therefore the tea garden people are a part of the population set apart and outside?—Yes, in a sense they are.

F-2366. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Are they not the bulk of the population?—But the Government knows quite well they are all very well looked after medically; each tea garden has its own medical officer.

F-2367. Would not your suggestions involve the maintenance of a very large establishment in a Province like Assam?—The Civil Surgeon must be there; the only extra person employed would be the public health officer of the district.

F-2368. *Colonel Russell*: And at present in Assam there are no public health officers?—No; there is one member for health and education I believe.

F-2369. Have you any experience of kala-azar in the area in which you work?—No, none whatever.

F-2370. Perhaps the Indian Tea Association would tell us what amount of money they subscribe to the Calcutta Tropical School in aid of that?—(*Mr. Roffey*) Rs. 27,200 per annum; that is the Indian Tea Association's contribution.

F-2371. The Annual Report on the Factories Act in Assam says that in the tea districts in many cases the atmosphere of the factory is impregnated with tea fluff and the women and children employed there work with a cloth tied round their eyes and nostrils. It says in fact that "the concensus of medical opinion is that the dust acting as an irritant is liable to cause throat and lung diseases." Have you anything to say about that?—(*Dr. McCombie*) No, except that the incidence of throat and lung diseases due to the inhalation of tea dust is very small and in most well equipped factories they have very efficient fans which extract all the dust from the room as soon as possible.

F-2372. Is that general?—Yes, very general.

F-2373. *The Chairman*: Is that a thing that the factory inspector could insist on in every factory?—I presume so, but I do not think it is necessary because from the point of view of efficiency of working the planter wants to get the fluff out. (*Mr. Kilburn*) Yes, that is so; it has been in force ever since I have been in Assam.

F-2374. Is it enforced by the factory inspector?—No. It has been in force for the last 25 years; under the Factory Act sufficient fans must be provided to remove the dust.

F-2375. But if there were a case of a laggard in that respect, the factory inspector has power to make them come up to the standard which is generally set?—Yes.

F-2376. Is there any consumption of opium in the tea gardens?—(*Dr. McCombie*) Yes, that is very extensive; it is worse on some gardens than on others.

F-2377. Is that a detriment to health?—I am not prepared to say that opium is the deadly drug that it is supposed by the League of Nations to be; I think coolies do very well on a moderate quantity of opium.

F-2378. Do you think there is any abuse of opium?—Of course there is excessive opium taking; the habit tends to grow and if it is excessive it is detrimental to the health of the coolie.

F-2379. Have you observed any considerable abuse among the tea garden population?—A certain percentage of them become excessive opium eaters and suffer in consequence, but it is not a large proportion. I think the average opium eating coolie goes on steadily eating a certain amount of opium every day just as his friend in another house takes his *pan* every day; he takes it as a sedative.

F-2380. *Colonel Garbett*: Is it true that the Government have now a policy under which they are reducing opium consumption?—Yes, the policy of the Government of Assam is to reduce opium consumption to nothing in 10 years time. Medical officers are co-operating. When a man applies for the renewal of his pass his ration of opium is steadily reduced and he comes before the medical officer.

F-2381. *Mr. Cliff*: Are all your opium takers registered?—They are supposed to be.

F-2382. Is it an effective registration?—Yes, I think it is, or will be in time.

F-2383. *The Chairman*: Do you mean to say that each opium taker on a tea garden estate is registered?—Yes, everyone in Assam; a man cannot buy opium now unless he produces his licence.

F-2384. *Mr. Ahmed*: Is the dosing of children with opium prevalent here?—No.

F-2385. *Miss Power*: Does that mean there is no doping of the children by the women, for instance when they go into the fields, as there is among some of the industrial women workers?—The work in Assam being out of doors, they nearly always take their children with them and there is very little infantile doping as far as I know.

F-2386. They do not dope them to keep them quiet?—No.

F-2387. *The Chairman*: Then you do not think opium is an appreciable factor in lowering the efficiency of the tea garden worker?—No, I do not think so.

F-2388. *Rev. Saikia*: Are there any Indian Assistant Managers in any of the European gardens?—(*Mr. McKercher*) There may be. I trained one last year for two years. They must be engineers. Our men are all engaged at home and they must go through a course of engineering, farming or tea testing. Different agencies have different customs. There are one or two in the Jorhat Company.

F-2389. Why do you not appoint more assistant managers from Indians?—I must refer you to the home board for that.

F-2390. Why do you not recruit *baboos* from the recruiting districts along with the coolies?—Because there is an abundance of them in Assam wanting work.

F-2391. Some of the Telegu coolies cannot understand some of the *baboos*?—If I dismiss a *baboo* there are about 40 applicants every day from Assam without going to Telegu.

F-2392. *Sir Alexander Murray*: I think the Padre's point is that you bring different *jats* of coolies including Telegu coolies and he thinks it would be advisable to have *baboos* who would be able to speak intelligently in these different languages?—There are the *sardars*.

F-2393. The *sardars* are suspect now-a-days?—I prefer to assist Assam; there are too many unemployed in Assam now.

F-2394. *Colonel Garbett*: Just now you alluded to the anti-malarial work done by the Doon Dooma Company in their gardens; could you give the Commission any idea as to how much money they have spent on the work?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) The associated gardens, that is 5 gardens with an approximate area of 6,000 acres, from 1924 to 1929 have spent a total of Rs. 2,36,285; that is an average of Rs. 41 per acre. The Doon Dooma Company, with approximately the same area and the same number of gardens (i.e., 5 gardens) to the end of 1927 have spent Rs. 2,42,379 on anti-malarial measures; that is for one year less than the other group. The Assam Frontier Company have also undertaken anti-malarial work; I have not any figures relating to their costs. (*Mr. McKercher*) We all do a little; I spend Rs. 2,000 or Rs. 3,000 a year on oiling.

F-2395. Can you give us any figures showing the average monthly income of the tea garden labourer as compared with that of the Assamese living in his village?—Yes. The monthly income of the Assamese raiyat is Rs. 12-9-4; that is taking the average Assamese raiyat with 3 *puras* of land and taking the average yield of the Sibsagar district which I got from the Settlement Officer. Speaking subject to correction, I believe there are about 4,000,000 Assamese raiyats in Assam. I am speaking of the raiyat living in the village. The income of the tea garden labourer, taking the average of our figures for last year for whole months, was Rs. 34 for a family. As to the concessions, I must again speak subject to correction as they vary on different gardens, they come to Rs. 10 per family. I have omitted firewood and various concessions which make the figure higher. There are 2,402 cattle on our estates, 202 buffaloes, 22 horses, 120 sheep, 349 goats, 396 ploughs, 41 carts. Pigs are not counted. I estimate the value of free building material for them at Rs. 23,000.

F-2396. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: What is the wage of an unskilled labourer—a coolie hiring himself out for casual labour outside the tea gardens, say in Jorhat. In Jorhat what is the average wage of unskilled labour?—I live some distance away and I could not tell you. But in our district we pay our villagers wages a little lower than those of the garden labour. The villager works when he likes occasionally while the garden coolie more or less belongs to me so that the casual labourer does not get the progressive rate which we pay to the tea garden labourer.

Rev. Saikia: Coolies working in the village earn 8 or 10 annas a day. A woman in the village gets 8 annas. In the town a man gets 12 annas. I do not know what a woman gets in the town.

The Chairman: That is casual labour and not work guaranteed all the year round?

Rev. Saikia: It is for casual labour.

F-2397. *Mr. Cliff*: You have given the figure of Rs. 34; is that the figure for the whole valley?—No. That is a calculation I made from my own experience.

F-2398. *Colonel Garbett*: Can you give the Commission any idea of what your medical expenses come to?—On my estate which consists of 3,300 acres of tea, the average for three years was £3,430, which works out at over £1 per acre. In the Doom Dooma district, where they have rather more coolies per acre, the cost is £1-13-0. Taking my figure of £1 per acre, Assam is paying £400,000 on our population of over a million, as compared with the Government's budget of £70,000 for 5/6 of the Province, our proportion of the population being 1/5. That is our total expenditure annually; it includes all foods given to sick coolies and the medical officers' pay. That is an average over three years on our own garden.

F-2399. I did not quite catch your reply to Mr. Chaman Lall when he asked you whether you would be agreeable to having a trade union on your garden?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) We say we object to it under present conditions and having regard to the representatives whom we have seen up to date.

F-2400. You would not receive a delegate from the All-India Trade Union Congress?—The constitution of that body is at present rather doubtful; if the newspaper reports which we have obtained are correct, there has been a split in the All-India Trade Union Congress, and I believe Mr. Chaman Lall and Mr. Joshi have dissociated themselves from that Congress.

F-2401. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Did you read about a new Federation being formed?—Yes, I have seen something about that in the papers.

F-2402. I suppose you are referring to that body?—I am referring to the split in the All-India Trade Union Congress. If labour leaders are not prepared to accept the All-India Trade Union Congress as it is, it is rather a lot to expect us to accept it.

F-2403. *Mr. Cliff*: It seems there are some tea garden managers who do not accept your Association?—They are not members of the Association. Generally speaking, if the trade unions sent representatives who know the conditions in Assam and who we had reason to believe would do good welfare work, I think they would be welcome. But at the present time that is very doubtful. It is rather hard to commit oneself because one has to consider the question.

F-2404. *The Chairman*: I gather that you have had a rather unhappy experience which makes you cautious?—Yes, we have; we are very suspicious about it.

F-2405. *Miss Power*: I want to know how the manager of a garden conveys any important piece of information to the coolies which they may wish them to know; what is your usual method of conveying information?—(*Mr. McKercher*) We either tell the coolies or inform the establishment.

F-2406. You sometimes tell the coolies?—A small thing, yes. We all talk to our coolies every day. They come to the office for this purpose twice a week; there is one of the managers sitting in the office twice a week. Otherwise we give instructions to our senior Indian staff and they convey the information to the coolie through the *chowkidars*.

F-2407. We have been to certain gardens where we find there is considerable confusion in the minds of the coolies as to whether the penal contract, for instance, still exists or not. What was the policy of the Association in regard to conveying to the workers the fact that the penal contract had been abolished by legislation and that their terms of service had accordingly been radically altered?—Nothing.

F-2408. Do you know what action was taken by individual gardens?—No, I do not know; it is not in my department. (*Mr. Kilburn*) In our particular gardens the chief difference was that under the Act a thumb print was taken on an agreement form. That was stopped and no thumb print was taken except in the book; it was not taken on a separate agreement form; it was just taken in the book as an acknowledgment of receipt of the money.

F-2409. But what information was conveyed to the workers to inform them that there had been a radical change in their terms of service; how was the discontinuance of the penal contract conveyed to the workers?—(*Mr. McKercher*) The issue of stamped papers was stopped. Originally we had a stamped paper which the coolie signed.

F-2410. Would the mere stopping of stamped paper convey that information to the coolies?—No, I do not think it would.

F-2411. You think they might continue to believe they were under the same contract?—I think they would and I think they do. I should like to say that in the course of 36 years I have never brought a coolie into court under any Act.

F-2412. They still think they are under a contract?—They think they are under a privilege or under an obligation; it is a privilege for the coolie to get the money, and they think they are under an obligation to work.

F-2413. And many of them still think they are under a definite obligation?—Under the obligation to work for one year when they get the money. The gardens do not all pay the same amount of money. I do not think we as an Association have taken any definite line in the matter. I have only been Chairman for the last two years. I remember the Act was withdrawn, but I am not sure whether we learnt about it from the *Gazette*.

F-2414. Was there any discussion at all as to conveying to the workers the fact that a Labour Commission had been created to look into the question of their conditions of labour?—I could not say; there have been no orders from headquarters.

F-2415. Do you feel that in view of the importance of the fact to them they should have been told about it?—No, I do not. If we had told them, a political man might have come in and we might have had strikes. I am now speaking from my own personal point of view. When the last Commission came in 1922 I believe the coolies came out on strike.

F-2416. Some of you have said that you do not think the coolies should be accessible to outside influence which aims at organizing them into trade unions lest it should lead to strikes; and you also say that for the same reason you do not think information as to the existence of the Labour Commission should have been brought to their attention. If they are to be as carefully protected from outside influence as that because of the mere possibility of rioting or anything similar, of which you may be afraid, how are they to get to know what legislation might exist or could be brought about for their greater protection?—I cannot tell you. They may get it through the establishment who can all read and write English.

F-2417. *Colonel Gurbett*: If the tea garden labourers had been told that the Royal Commission was coming round, do you think they would have understood what a Royal Commission was?—No, I do not think they would have understood the significance of it.

F-2418. *Miss Power*: Would it not have been possible to explain to them what this Commission was?—No. I know what I should do if I were a coolie in that case; I should ask for more pay and anything else I could get.

F-2419. You say that "as so few labourers work the full number of days, it is considered that the statutory establishment of a minimum wage is unnecessary and would be difficult to enforce." Would you explain why you associate the practicability of establishing a minimum wage with the question of working the full number of days; what exactly is the meaning of that sentence?—It means that if they require more wages they would work more days. I think the present average is 65 per cent.

F-2420. But the extent to which they work has nothing whatever to do with the question of the establishment of a minimum wage; most of you already pay on a uniform system, do you not?—Many do, yes.

F-2421. I think one of you said to-day that the rates were based on 1½ annas for a man and 1 anna for a woman?—We had a minimum wage under the penal contract, but it was done away with when the penal contract was abolished. If you guaranteed an 8 hours or 7 hours day I should be very pleased to have a minimum wage, but it is very difficult where coolies sometimes work 1, 2, 3 or 4 hours. I am afraid there would be terrible confusion. If you could lay down a minimum wage for so many hours' work I should agree with you. In the tea house or in the factory work where there is a stated time, I quite agree it might be done, but it is very different in the garden where the coolies come and go.

F-2422. But I do not know of any minimum wage with regard to which a certain amount of work is compulsorily required. On a piece-rate you fix the rate for the piece so as to yield so much an hour, or in the case of a time rate so much an hour. Under both schemes there is nothing that compels a worker to work so many hours, and yet the system of regulating wages by means of a minimum rate on those lines has proved feasible all the world over?

The Chairman: May I take it that the essential difference between your case and that of factory labour in which the minimum wage is fixed sometimes in other countries, is that the employer in that case will discharge the worker who only puts in half time, whereas you do not discharge your workers although they may work only 60 per cent. of the possible hours?—That is the position.

F-2423. *Miss Power*: Is not the position the same in your case as in the case of Ceylon?—I have never been to Ceylon.

F-2424. Is there not a minimum wages board for garden coolies in Ceylon?—I think there is more discipline there.

F-2425. But the point is that the wage in Ceylon is not coupled with any compulsion to do so much work?—I think there is an 8-hour day.

F-2426. They are not compelled to work an 8-hour day although that is the legal day?—Then where does the minimum wage come in if they do not work 8 hours?

F-2427. They are paid on a piece rate, at so much per hour?—We practically do that.

F-2428. Then why do you feel that it would be impossible to have a minimum wages board?—I thought you meant that you would give a woman so much per day whether she worked or not.

F-2429. No, I meant a uniform piece-rate or hourly rate?—The rates must vary according to the conditions of the soil. If you have a piece-rate which will yield so much an hour, the piece-rate may vary in different gardens.

F-2430. But each piece rate task would be fixed so as to yield so much an hour?—On tea gardens there are different kinds of soil; some soils are stiff while others are light and the task is adjusted accordingly. Then there are medium and large bushes and in that case the task is adjusted accordingly.

F-2431. If you had a legal minimum rate throughout the whole of the industry all that each garden would be required to do would be to fix the piece rates to suit the conditions prevailing in their garden so as to yield the coolie of ordinary capacity the legal minimum rate?—But conditions vary throughout the year.

F-2432. Then you would alter the piece rate task to suit the season; it would mean that everybody would have to fix the piece rates according to the conditions prevailing in each particular garden so as to yield the coolie not less than whatever minimum rate was fixed?—I do not think we should object to that.

F-2433. You would not object to a wage board for the industry?—Should we have to pay for it?

F-2434. I do not think that is customary; normally the board, as in Ceylon, would consist of a number of workers' representatives, employers' representatives and independent persons selected by the Government?—I believe the conditions in Ceylon are very different from our conditions; they have ample labour from one very small area very near the base. In Assam communications are difficult. In Assam employers are compelled to treat their labour properly because an employer who does not do so will lose his labour.

F-2435. *Colonel Garbett*: Where do you get your labour from?—We have 42 depôts spread all over India.

F-2436. *Miss Power*: If you had a Board of that kind the result would be, I take it, that in respect of wages the bad gardens would have to come up to the level of the good. Do you not think that the good gardens would profit thereby?—Yes, but there are so many things to take into consideration. The conditions vary so much from week to week and from year to year that you would need to have a Board sitting on every bush in order to make the necessary adjustments.

F-2437. In each of the cases which you have in mind you are already making the adjustments so that the worker earns so much per hour. You are doing already in individual gardens exactly what would be required of you under a statutory rate. Why, therefore, do you say there would be so many difficulties?—(*Mr. Kilburn*) One great difficulty is the difference in natural conditions. Some districts are popular with coolies. Others are unpopular. A popular garden with natural conditions can keep sufficient labour for its requirements on a certain rate of pay. A garden with not such favourable natural conditions has to offer some inducement. The only possible inducement is higher wages. That is why the wages are higher in Upper Assam. There you get huge blocks of tea, extending

in one case to 16 miles—garden adjoining garden the whole way through, with no jungle and very little rice land. There is great shortage of firewood in the middle of that piece of tea land. Also there is no land to cultivate. The tendency is for the coolies to leave the central gardens and come out to the fringe, because there they have a garden to work on which is adjoining the jungle land, with new land ready for cultivation, and with plenty of firewood. The gardens on the edge have plenty of labour. The ones in the middle are short of labour, and the only thing they can do to make the conditions as desirable as possible for the coolies is to increase their pay. The conditions vary so tremendously, as does the cost of living, that it is very hard to generalize.

F-2438. But the variations to which you refer already exist?—Yes; and they are dealt with in that way—by different rates of pay in different districts.

F-2439. Why do you feel that a statutory minimum wage Act, which compelled all gardens to pay a piece rate or a time rate of not less than so many annas per hour, would create difficulty? In so far as it would compel all gardens to pay not less than a certain amount (presumably a living wage) would you not be in favour of it?—I would if it could be done, but I doubt if it could be done.

F-2440. *The Chairman*: How many Inspectors do you think would be required for Assam?—You would want one for every group of gardens at least, and he would be kept fairly busy.

F-2441. *Miss Power*: You say that certain concessions which are given to the workers amount to a large increase on the money wages. Has the Assam Branch of the Tea Association ever worked out the cash value of the concessions on their tea gardens?—(*Mr. McKercher*) It is impossible to give you a fair figure because, again, the conditions vary on each garden. Taking my own garden it is Rs. 10 approximately, not taking into account the grazing, vegetable gardens, the material which we give for making cattle houses, and so on, which comes to another Rs. 3.

F-2442. *Mr. Cliff*: Between a garden which gives these various facilities and a garden which does not, is there a variation in the rates of wages to the extent of Rs. 5 a month?—(*Mr. McKercher*) Yes, I should think there would be that variation. (*Mr. Roffey*) The Government return shows that in this district the figure is Rs. 11-9 and in the Dibrugarh district, where there is no *khet* land and firewood, it is Rs. 17-3-10, so that really the difference is over Rs. 5.

F-2443. *The Chairman*: May I take it, quite broadly, that your answer is this: that where there is no *khet* land, or very little, increased wages have to be paid to correspond with the equivalent that a coolie gets on more favourable estates by the allocation of *khet* land?—Yes.

F-2444. *Miss Power*: Referring to the question of schools, does your Association make any recommendation to its members as to the minimum age at which a child should be allowed on the gardens to work?—No.

F-2445. Do you think the schools would be better patronized if children under the age of 11, say, were not allowed on the garden?—You would never keep them off the garden.

F-2446. There is a very great deal of patient educational work being done with these people in order to make them, against their natural instincts, avail themselves of western medicine. It seems to outsiders, like myself, that that work has met and is meeting with remarkable success, and that it has paid you to bring about that success. Why has it not been equally possible for you to do the same patient educational work in regard to getting these people to send their children to school. Admittedly at the moment it does not pay you to deprive the garden of child labour. Is it a fair deduction, therefore, that the absence of that patient educational work in regard to school attendance is due to the fact that it would not pay you, whereas the patient educational work in regard to medical attendance does pay you?—There would be great trouble in preventing children plucking with their mothers or plucking on their own. As an old coolie will tell you the educated son will not bury his father. We have to get over that. There are infants and cows and chickens to be looked after by the children. I think it will come after a time. It is improving. We are only 1 per cent. below India in the total.

F-2447. Would not you be prepared to make any rule of that kind?—I should not like to enforce it; I could not. We do encourage education. Three circulars have been sent out urging managers to provide schools, and many more schools have been built.

F-2448. Where there are a number of gardens under one firm, employing a large number of women, and in view of the proverbial hesitancy of women suffering from specifically female diseases to go to men doctors, do you think it would be advisable that a qualified woman doctor, whether Indian or European should be employed?—(Dr. McCombie) Yes, there is a scope for a qualified woman doctor in the treatment of midwifery cases and diseases of women. (Mr. McKercher) Our bishop brought out a lady doctor. First of all he brought out a nurse. He suggested training *dais*. I sent eight for training in two years, but the difficulty I found was to get exactly the type of women I wished, because I had to consult the whole of the people of different castes and customs. If you make one mistake it immediately prejudices the system. The coolies were pleased with the idea. We paid the fees and we gave so much if the child lived for one year. We provided a maternity home with four rooms, two beds in each, so that the man and his wife could come and live there during the period. I found that only the bad cases came. It was not the woman who objected. The man said there was no one to look after his cattle. There is a slight improvement now. The other day there was one case which made a wonderful recovery. I have seen two cases on one occasion in the maternity home, but that is the most I have ever seen. (Dr. McCombie) The coolie woman, like her sister the world over prefers to have her confinement at her own home. I think it is a matter of time.

F-2429a. Mr. Clow: Do you still keep up the practice of selling rice at concessionary rates?—(Mr. Kilburn) Not in Upper Assam. It is exceptional for a garden to give rice at a fixed rate.

F-2430a. Or even at a concessionary rate?—They usually pay cost price. When the rates were increased from Rs. 6 and Rs. 7 per month to 8 and 6 annas a day, the concession which had existed up to that date of selling rice at Rs. 3 a maund when it cost us Rs. 8 a maund, was abolished, and the higher wage was given to balance it.

F-2431a. The practice is not common of selling rice at a certain amount below the market price?—Not in Upper Assam.

F-2432a. With regard to the minimum wage, suppose it took the form of stating that for a certain reasonable piece of work, say four hours' work, a certain number of annas must be paid, would you anticipate great difficulty in conforming to such a provision?—Not in our district; the conditions vary so much throughout Assam that I am not prepared to give a general answer.

F-2433a. Suppose you were able to go to Ranchi, for instance, and say definitely to the labourer: "For a task of so many hours you are guaranteed a wage of so much," would not that assist recruiting?—We should get into trouble for enticing. If it was legal I should love to do it.

The Chairman: That is one of the matters under our immediate consideration —whether the question of inducement ought not to be wiped out.

F-2434a. Mr. Clow: The average earnings are of very little value, because the ordinary coolie cannot guarantee that he will be up to the average, or have all the advantages that the other man has?—I agree.

F-2435a. If he knew there was a guarantee of a certain daily wage, provided he did a reasonable day's or even half a day's work, would not that be a much more powerful inducement to him than merely telling him that the average earnings on the estate were so much?—I agree. The only difficulty is the *khet* fellow. If you push him out of the picture I agree with you. He is the man who pulls our average down.

F-2436a. Do the *Nunias* who come up in very large numbers, do so without any inducement whatever?—They have no license or agreement. The contractors pay them and pay their faro. I cannot do it because I am an employer.

F-2437a. They come willingly in very large numbers?—Yes, in thousands.

F-2438a. Do you think it is merely the existence of Act VI which prevents other labourers doing the same?—(Mr. Kilburn) To a very great extent. This short-term labour costs us Rs. 80 to import. If we could add that Rs. 80 to their wages we could make the wages so attractive, and still save money, that they would come to the gardens and apply for work if it were not for Act VI.

F-2439a. Suppose you had a system of free recruitment on very short terms, do you think you would attract a very large amount of labour?—We can get as much *six-months* labour as we require.

F-2440a. Does an average coolie who has no knowledge of tea garden work do efficient work during the short term of six months he is here on your garden?—*(Mr. Kilburn)* He does this when hoeing and flushing. The short-term labourers are nearly all of them ex-tea garden coolies. They come up in the cold weather when our wage earnings are at the lowest. They earn some money and go away. They will not come up in large numbers in the rains when we can afford to take any number. The more the coolies we have in the rains, the more the leaf we get and make better the tea from it.

F-2441a. Mr. McKercher or yourself spoke of a system of control without legislation. The same statement was made to us at Silchar. I do not see how it is possible. Could you explain it a little further?—How is it done in the Dooars?—We want free recruiting and free labour, the same as the Dooars system.

F-2442a. With no control of any kind?—There is the Tea Districts Labour Association to control it.

F-2443a. You will have to compel all the estates to join the Tea Districts Labour Association?—93 per cent. of them are already in the Association; only 7 per cent. are outside. Many Indian gardens are already members and we are trying to get more.

F-2444a. Do you recognize that it would involve Government exercising compulsion over the remaining 7 per cent. to join the Association?—I do not think so.

F-2445a. *Colonel Garbett*: Would it not be possible for the 7 per cent. to have their own local agents?—Yes, it is. But Government do not want to have too many persons to deal with. I do not see why the Indian gardens should not form an Association of their own. If they wish to do so, they may be given the same privilege.

F-2446a. In that case Government will be left with no control?—Let them have registration in the recruiting districts.

F-2447a. For that legislation is necessary?—What do they do for the Dooars? There is no control—Why?

Because it is thought that no control is necessary.—The result is that in the Dooars a *sardar* brings 5 or 6 coolies on an average and the cost of recruitment is only Rs. 40 per head whereas it is over Rs. 200 here. The cost of importation is great and the enticement of labour will increase.

F-2448a. Some years ago a suggestion was made that the possibility of free recruiting should be examined. Then the tea industry opposed it?—The industry is a very large thing. The local Government did not agree to the suggestion made by the Association.

F-2449. *The Chairman*: I think you made that clear that you yourself would like immediately free recruiting and free labour?—Yes, free recruiting and free labour controlled by our Tea Districts Labour Association.

F-2450. The recruiting Provinces are not prepared for that?—They are not.

F-2451. We have to recognize their right to take that position and what we must address ourselves to is some satisfactory arrangement covering the few years still to come, which one might hope would be followed by complete freedom to Assam as to any other Province in India?—The peculiar thing is that Assam is the only Province and tea is the only industry, which is restricted in this way.

F-2452. We recognize that it ought not to be. Still one has to deal with old prejudices and evils which were only recently eradicated. As practical men we must recognize facts while we aim at ideals?—The real thing is that Assam has large tracts of waste Government land, of which about 397,000 acres have been colonized. These restrictions really tend to stop the colonization of these lands. If I was the Deputy Commissioner of a place wherefrom I get labour now I would not allow the labour to go to Assam if I could help it, for my revenues will go down and my servants will cost me more.

F-2453. *Mr. Clow*: I do not think that is really their attitude?—I am only talking of my view.

The Chairman: I think we all understand there is a mixture of motives.

F-2454. *Mr. Clow*: I think you protested at the beginning against the suggestion that any restraint was placed on the freedom of the labourers desiring to leave. Are you prepared to say that in no garden any such restraint is exercised?—You might get black sheep in any flock. It is a physical impossibility to keep them on the gardens of a large estate. It might be possible in an isolated place where the lines are small, but where you have lines all over the place it is not possible to do that. They go to the bazaar every week.

F-2455. There might be some garden several marches away; even if there are no *chowkidars* to keep them back they might have some difficulty in finding money?—No, there is no difficulty in finding money.

F-2456. Unfortunately we are not able to visit other centres. Could you tell us in what respects the conditions in other districts further up the valley differ from those we have seen?—There is less cultivation, more virgin land and the pay is slightly higher. They lose more labour. In a congested area like Doom Dooma the cost of living is more.

F-2457. As regards the question of allotting expenditure on such work as welfare and education to the revenue account may I take it that the general practice is to allot expenditure of less than Rs. 500 to revenue account?—That is our practice. It varies in other estates. I think the Jorhat Tea Company has a limit of Rs. 1,000. But whenever it affects my commission I take the Directors' sanction to put it into capital account.

F-2458. *Sir Alexander Murray*: After the Robertson Committee reported in 1906 was not a circular sent to every tea garden manager in Assam? Could you tell me what that was?—It was a long time ago and I do not remember what it was.

F-2459. With regard to the changed conditions in the system of coolie labour since the penal clauses have been done away with, would you say that every coolie has been expressly told that he was free to go and that the old methods of recruitment and labour were no longer in force?—I do not think we have done that.

F-2460. Was not the failure on the part of garden managers to make this public property to everybody concerned, one of the causes of the difficulties of recruitment? Is it not desirable that that should be done?—I have made a note of that and I will put it to the Association.

F-2461. *Mr. Cliff*: Rev. Saikia was telling us of a number of old aged coolies who were now unable to maintain themselves and driven to a state of beggary in the streets. It may be that they have done good work on the gardens for the best part of their lives, but now they have no friends and are unable to maintain themselves. If Rev. Saikia locates the people to whom he refers, will it be possible for you to put their case to your secretary in order that he might enquire and see what could be done?—Yes, we would welcome that.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. T. A. CHALMERS, M.L.A., Superintendent, Bazaloni Tea Co., Ltd., Rajgarhali Division.

F-2462. *The Chairman*: Mr. Chalmers, you come from Doom Dooma?—Yes.

F-2463. Will you help us by yourself putting forward any special points that you think will be of assistance to the Commission?—You asked several questions as regards legislation and my colleagues here expressed their opinion that there ought to be free recruiting. So far as I am concerned I think we ought to get free recruiting. I suggest that Act VI should be entirely repealed, and that there should be no restrictions on any labourer coming to Assam whether he is sent up by an *arkatti* or by anybody else. I want to protect the recruit in Assam itself and all that is necessary is to legislate for conditions as they are now. A Labour Commissioner should be appointed and the Deputy Commissioner should, as at present, be an Inspector of Labour. It should be made a condition that all labourers imported into Assam should be repatriated after 3 or 4 years, whatever fixed time is agreed upon. In any case every labourer must be repatriated and the only condition on which he can stay here is when the Deputy Commissioner specially permits him to stay. It should be compulsory for the employer to register the arrival of all new coolies and inform the Deputy Commissioner who should send a copy of the information in the prescribed form to the Labour Commissioner. The Labour Commissioner would prescribe the necessary form. It should be the duty of the Labour Commissioner to repatriate any coolie who has been recruited by fraud or misrepresentation or for any other sufficient reason within one year of his arrival in Assam. I think a system like that will meet all the objections of the people, the authorities and the representatives of Indian labour. A man's address will always be discovered and his friends can always be sure that he would

come back some time or other. Also it would not be necessary to bind him down to serve any particular employer during the three years he remains in Assam. I do not want anything binding on the labourer; he must be free to go wherever he likes. If he leaves one employer and goes to another, the latter should be bound to repatriate him after he has been in Assam for three years. He should also pay *pro rata* to the first employer the cost of bringing that labourer to Assam. So far as legislation itself goes that is how I visualize the position. I am speaking entirely for myself and as an individual. I do not claim that these views are supported by anybody else.

We have heard quite a lot about wages. I have here the wages paid on my own particular garden. On the Rajgarhali Estate the Government returns for September show that a man earns Rs. 20-3 a month, a woman Rs. 21-3 and a child Rs. 14-8-6. The March returns are Rs. 17-4-6, Rs. 12-4-11 and Rs. 6-12-9, respectively. I have a smaller garden within four miles of Rajgarhali called Bazaloni. The wages there are: September returns—Rs. 18-12-2, Rs. 16-13-11 and Rs. 10-15-5, respectively; March returns—Rs. 16-1-10, Rs. 10-12-4, and Rs. 6-15-4, respectively. There are two reasons for the difference in wages between the two gardens. One is due to short-term labour recruited for six months. Those labourers not being acquainted entirely with tea garden conditions and methods of work are not able to earn the same wages as labourers who have been here a longer time and who know the work thoroughly. That applies particularly to plucking leaf. The other reason is that in the Bazaloni garden there is a certain amount of cultivated area for rice. The Rajgarhali garden has a comparatively small proportion of cultivated land. I would like to say how these wages have been earned in my garden. Mine is a new garden built up in the last 10 years and it is possible to do things with new labour which you cannot do with labour accustomed to old methods in force for a considerable time. Instead of permitting the man to work for 3 hours and then allowing him to go away or work more as he likes, I insist on the men earning their 12 annas by inducing them to work six hours. If a man does not earn this I prefer to turn him out. I have turned out people and a certain percentage of them have left me and gone somewhere else where they need not work longer hours. For instance in the Cinnamara garden the wages were said to be Rs. 12 and Rs. 13. We saw some pruning there done by labourers earning what looked like lower wages. But I can confidently assert that the rate paid to the labourers in Cinnamara for that work is the same as I am paying in my Rajgarhali Estate. With regard to the question of agreements, when Act XIII was abolished I introduced a system which is still going on. I altered the basis of the agreement money or bonus money, whatever you may call it. The usual rate was Re. 1 per month and I increased it to Rs. 2 per month. If a man worked 24 days in the month he got Rs. 2 and proportionately less amounts for less number of working days. This gave him a lump sum sufficient to pay his fare back to any part of India.

F-2464. Full 6-hour days?—It did not matter.

F-2465. *Mr. Cliff*: He got it before or after?—He got it after a year's work. At the time he got it he had the option to go home or undertake to work for another year. In some cases they did accept the alternative and went home. I find that there are a number of people in every garden who will not accept that bonus. They are still under the impression that it is a binding document. It is not a document in our case; we do not take a document. They think it is binding on their honour to complete a year's service. Some of them think it *infra dig* to bind themselves down. They would rather be free than accept this Rs. 24 a year.

F-2466. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What are your recruiting costs?—Exactly the same as others. I get my people through the Tea Districts Labour Association.

F-2467. When you turn a man off if he does not do certain things what happens to him?—I cannot say. There are a lot of people willing to take him.

F-2468. If a man came up to you and was not prepared to work so many hours you simply asked him to go away?—Yes. It is a question of building up. I have telegraphed for my books and I propose to leave them with you so that you may look into them and see the wages paid daily and so on.

F-2469. How many men have left you?—Very few. Otherwise I could not do it. Naturally the whole point is that you can persuade the labour to do it. But with regard to these six-monthly people I cannot turn them out. I allowed them to earn lower wages than the majority of the people on my estate. As a result I returned those people within 4½ months. I wrote a letter to the Tea Association which the Secretary printed and circulated to all members giving the history of short-term labour as I had experienced it.

F-2470. *The Chairman*: Mr. Chalmers, your aim is not to have any appreciable quantity of *khet* land. You believe that it is part of economy and efficiency for your garden to build up a working force which will work at least 6 hours a day?—Yes. I have two gardens in which this system is worked. In one of them there is quite as much *khet* land as there is on an average garden in Assam.

F-2471: In that garden also do you insist on the workers putting in a minimum of 6 hours a day?—Yes, except when they are cultivating their land.

F-2472. Your aim of having a labour force which is accustomed to working a minimum of 6 hours a day, from one point of view, represents business and economy?—Quite so.

F-2473. Does it on the other hand result in equal contentment of the people?—They can always go if they like. I am in the centre of 80 to 100 thousand acres of waste land to which people are migrating and settling. They would not stay if they were not contented.

F-2474. I think I quite appreciate, as a man who had some little training in business, your point of view. On the other hand, there is possibly the other point of view, namely, whether or not many of the people who come or are likely to come to Assam may not be happy and contented to work half the day for the employer and the other half on their own lands?—We are tea planters, not paddy cultivators.

F-2475. I appreciate that, looking at it from the point of view of the planters—The only object of giving rice land is to have a contented population living on the estate.

F-2476. You would prefer therefore to employ your labour for a small number of years as tea garden workers pure and simple and then let them depart having earned enough money to settle on what is called waste Government land?—I am not particular so long as a man is willing and does work 6 hours a day and earn his wages. If you had enough labour here, if there was a surplus population, then competition would compel people to work more than 3 hours a day. We would not be having all these evils we are having now, and it would not have been necessary for this Commission to come. People would have to work longer hours to earn more money and be better off because their wages would increase in proportion to the extra hours worked.

F-2477. You have given us an interesting picture of your ideal. Every one of us here shares your ideal of complete freedom of labour. But have you not forgotten in sketching your ideals some of the difficulties of recruiting areas?—I have provided for every difficulty.

F-2478. In your repatriation within a year of everybody who was undesirable or wrongly enticed?—The Labour Commissioner should be an Indian Civilian from the Province in which the labour is recruited. He must have the sole authority to repatriate on the same condition as the Agent to the Governor-General in Ceylon. He has the power to repatriate a coolie recruited by fraud or misrepresentation or for any other sufficient reason. During the last few years since this system was started in Ceylon he has repatriated just decimal one per cent. of the coolies recruited annually.

F-2479. Even so, in the recruiting areas and the dépôts we have heard of cases of women changing their names, leaving their legitimate husbands and being called the wives of somebody else and coming to Assam. *Vice versa* in the case of husbands. We have heard of these things in the recruiting areas and we are bound to take them into consideration. I do not see how your scheme meets difficulties of that kind in the recruiting areas?—We have heard of that in other places also. The point is that under the present system you can scarcely trace the people and there is no proper control. In the scheme I have suggested you can easily trace the man and he can be repatriated at once. You can do it without involving all this tremendous expenditure of money and discouraging people coming to Assam. That is what the present Act does. We have worked the Act for many years, but we have not improved recruiting conditions. It has only tended to increase the cost of recruiting to an absurdly large figure. What will happen under my scheme will be this. Someone reports that Buddhu's wife has run away with Sanoo to Assam. Immediately the Labour Commissioner in Assam is telegraphed to. He has before him in the prescribed form a list of all the arrivals giving the places they come from, the time they left their place of departure, the time of their arrival in Assam and so on. Within a week they can be sent back if necessary.

F-2480. Did I understand you to say that an *arkatti* or anybody else could bring labour to Assam?—It would be impossible for him to operate if this system was introduced. He would be wiped out of business.

F-2481. I do not think you quite appreciate the feelings that remain about the very word "arkatti" in some quarters?—I have myself recruited under the arkatti system and I do know something of the abuses. I do not want to introduce it again under any conditions. But what is the use of having the present complicated system of control. It is just like using a sledge hammer to break a watch.

The Chairman: We value very much your original and valuable suggestions for its solution.

F-2482. *Mr. Cliff:* Is it clear, Mr. Chalmers, that you will have a protector for the working population here in Assam?—I have no objection to any scheme of a welfare bureau or anything like that. But the Labour Commissioner I have suggested will be a man, whatever staff he might have, who would have the sole authority to repatriate for any sufficient reason that appeals to him.

F-2483. Have you got all the labour you require?—No, I want more labour for both my gardens. There is no such thing as a fixed labour force. It is always a diminishing quantity.

F-2484. Do you roughly pay 2 annas an hour?—Yes.

F-2485. How do you get discipline?—Exactly as I told you. If a man is not prepared to accept our conditions we ask him to leave the estate.

F-2486. *Sir Alexander Murray:* You referred to emigration to Ceylon. Is not that emigration controlled and regulated by registration in the labour recruiting districts?—Ceylon is an overseas place and the labourers are going away from the jurisdiction of the Government of India. That is not the case here.

F-2487. *Diwan Chaman Lall:* If you have protection *qua* repatriation of the worker, would you be in favour of protection in regard to conditions of labour and wages as well?—I have no fear of anything so long as it is run by Government on modern conditions.

(The witness withdrew. The Commission adjourned.)

ASSAM.

Fifty-third Meeting.

JORHAT.

Monday, 13th January 1930.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (*Chairman*).

SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. DIWAN CHAMAN LALL, M.L.A.

MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. MISS B. M. LE POER POWER.

MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. LT.-COLONEL A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E.,
I.M.S. (*Medical Assessor*).

MR. JOHN CLIFF.

REV. THENURAM SAIKIA.

LT.-COLONEL H. C. GARBETT, Superintendent, Kanjikooah Budli Beta Tea Co., Ltd. } Assistant Commissioners.

MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN Lady Assessor.

MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. } Joint Secretaries.

MR. A. DIBBIN }

At Meleng Tea Estate.

RAM DAT KURMI, RAM AUTAR PASI, AUTAR KORI,
tea garden coolies (Mr. Clow interpreted).

F-2488. *Mr. Clow*: Do you all come from Bahraich district?—(*Ram Dat Kurmi*) Yes.

F-2489. When did you come?—About 11 months ago.

F-2490. Did you all come together?—(*Autar Kori*) I came first and the other two came a week later.

F-2491. Did you live in one and the same village?—No.

F-2492. Did any others come from Bahraich?—Yes, there were two others, Jaiman, and his nephew Shanker, a boy; they came a week or two before.

F-2493. Who brought you?—Naipal *sardar* brought me and Babul *chowkidar* brought the other two.

F-2494. *The Chairman*: You have not got your families with you?—(*Ram Dat Kurmi*) I am married and so is Ram Autar Pasi, but Autar Kori is not married.

F-2495. Are your wives here with you?—No, we have no one with us here.

F-2496. Have those of you who are married been sending any money to your wives?—No, neither of us have sent any money to our families.

F-2497. Are you thinking of bringing your wives here?—Yes, we want to bring our families here.

F-2498. Have you asked to go as *sardars* to bring your families?—(*Ram Autar Pasi*) Yes, I told the sahib I wanted to go, and that I would bring my wife and family, my mother and father and others of my house. The sahib gave permission and said he was agreeable. When we get leave we shall go.

F-2499. Do you think your wives and families will be happier here than in your own country?—Yes, everything will be all right when they come here. We get more money on the garden.

F-2500. How much cultivation have you?—I have none. (*Ram Dat Kurmi*) I have 5 or 6 *bighas*.

F-2501. *The Chairman*: Why did you leave Bahraich?—(*Ram Dat Kurmi*) I left Bahraich because the fields did not yield enough for me. I have two brothers on the same fields with my father and mother. I have no fields here; nobody on the gardens has any land.

F-2502. *Mr. Cliff*: Do you live together?—No. We feed separately and we live in separate quarters.

F-2503. Does that mean that you have got a house to yourself?—Yes, I live alone.

F-2504. Have any of you three saved any money since you came?—No. (*Autar Kori*) I have not saved any; how could I have bought these clothes if I had saved money. The money I get just suffices for me, so how can I save. (*Ram Autar Pasi*) We have saved no money. Whatever we have saved we have spent on buying clothes.

F-2505. *The Chairman*: When you have your family with you will you be able to save then?—(*Autar Kori*) Yes, we should be able to save money then.

F-2506. How do your families live now?—(*Ram Autar Pasi*) They live by labouring and begging occasionally.

F-2507. What do you get for a *hazira*?—(*Ram Dat Kurmi*) I get no more than sufficient to feed myself.

F-2508. How much did you earn last week?—I got Rs. 1-8 for my *hazira*, and when I can manage it I get Re. 1 for my *ticca* work.

F-2509. Did you work 6 days last week?—Yes.

F-2510. Are you going to work *ticca* to-day?—If I can I will.

F-2511. Was your thumb impression taken when you came here?—No. (*Ram Autar Pasi*) When I was recruited my name was taken in a book and my thumb impression was taken, but it was not taken here.

F-2512. *Mr. Clow*: Were you given any advance by Babul *chowkidar*?—I got Rs. 10 in my country.

(The witness withdrew.)

Ten male tea garden coolies (Rev. Saikia interpreted).

F-2513. *The Chairman*: Where do you come from?—Kharagpur.

F-2514. Did all of you come together?—Yes.

F-2515. Did the *sardar* bring you?—Yes.

F-2516. How long have you been here?—Two years.

F-2517. Have you your families with you?—Yes.

F-2518. Did you bring your families with you or did you go and fetch them?—We came with our families.

F-2519. Are you better off here than you were in the country from which you came?—I am better off here than I was in my country.

F-2520. And you wish to stop here?—Yes. I am quite happy to stay here.

F-2521. Have you any land here?—We have no land to cultivate.

F-2522. Do you save money?—I have not sufficient money for my food and clothing.

F-2523. *The Chairman*: How much do you spend on drink in a month?—I do not drink wine.

F-2524. *Rev. Saikia*: You had better tell the truth in the sight of God. Do you drink?—No.

F-2525. *The Chairman*: You say you are better off here than you were in your own country before you came?—I wish to stay here. (*Another witness*) I want to go to my country to bring my father and mother.

F-2526. *Colonel Garbett*: Have you asked the manager if you can do so?—If the manager sends me I am quite willing to go to my country and bring my family to Assam.

(The witness withdrew.)

KUNDHAN. DOME, male tea garden coolie.

F-2527. *Mr. Clow*: What district do you come from?—Kalahandi.

F-2528. What work do you do?—I am a *sardar*.

F-2529. *Mr. Cliff*: How many men have you under you?—I have 106 in all, but there are fewer to-day than usual.

F-2530. How are you paid?—I get a commission of one pice for every 4 annas of work done and I also get Rs. 8 as pay.

F-2531. When do the men come to work?—About 8 or 9 a.m.

F-2532. What do you do if they do not come?—If a man is absent for a day or two we do nothing, but if he does not come for three or four days he is beaten. They come then. The sahib scolds me and I scold them and I only beat them if they are really bad. The sahib beats them.

F-2533. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Do the sahibs beat them themselves?—The sahibs do not beat them now but in the old days they did. Before the present manager came there was a lot of beating.

F-2534. *Mr. Clow*: Who beat Kirodhar?—The leading sahib.

F-2535. When?—About a year ago.

F-2536. *Colonel Garbett*: Why?—Because he was not working and was lazy.

F-2537. Is he lazy now?—No, not since that happened.

F-2538. *Mr. Cliff*: Formerly you told us that he was beaten because there was a disturbance. What was the disturbance?—It was merely that his work was bad.

(The witness withdrew.)

KIRODHAR, a Goalā caste male coolie.

F-2539. Where do you come from?—From the Ranchi district.

F-2540. *The Chairman*: How long have you been here?—Five or six years.

F-2541. Are your wife and family here?—Yes.

F-2542. Are they happier here than they were in their own country?—Yes, I am fairly satisfied.

F-2543. Are you beaten?—When the sahib tells the *sardar* to do so. He says: “Look at that man and go for him”; and then we are beaten.

F-2544. When you are lazy you are beaten?—No, when the work is bad.

F-2545. When the sahib says that your work is bad, does he beat you himself or tell the *sardar* to do so? —If the *sardar* is there he tells the *sardar* to do so, but if the *sardar* is not there he does it himself.

F-2546. *Mr. Cliff*: What were your earnings last week?—I get Rs. 6-11 a month for *hazira* and I got Rs. 2-8 last week for the *ticca*.

F-2547. I understand you have a wife; have you any family?—I have one son but he does not work. My wife works. I have three sisters and two brothers here.

F-2548. *The Chairman*: Do you want to go back to your country or to stay here?—It is a matter of finance. If I were rich enough I should like to go to my country.

F-2549. *Mr. Cliff*: Have you any land here?—Nobody has any land here.
 F-2550. Have you saved anything?—I have saved nothing.
 F-2551. Did you ever go as a *sardar* to Ranchi?—Yes, I have been once.
 F-2552. Did you bring anybody back?—I did not bring anybody; I could not get anybody to come back with me. Some of them will come now.
 F-2553. Are you in debt?—Yes, I am in debt.
 F-2554. To whom?—I owe Rs. 4 to Mohan who is here pruning.
 F-2555. Do you owe anything to the Marwari?—Only a few annas for grain.
 (The witness withdrew.)

**Statement by CHEMBELI, woman labourer (KALONDI DOME),
 Meleng Tea Estate.**

Chembeli states that she is a coolie on the Meleng Tea Estate and was born on the garden. She has three children who are not working and her husband is dead. She has finished her *hazira* for the day consisting of pruning forty trees for which her wage is 4 annas. She did not wish to do any *ticca* work to-day because she had work at her own home. When she does *hazira* she gets monthly wages of Rs. 6 a month. When she does *ticca* she is paid by the week, 4 annas for skiffing 120 trees. She received Rs. 1-8 last week for *ticca*. She came to work at 8 o'clock this morning and is returning from her work (the time is 11-20 a.m. and so her work must have been finished by 11). She owes about Rs. 8 at the shop. In answer to a question whether she has any other income on which to keep herself and her children she replies, "No." Her children are not fed by the garden. The ages of her children are 10, 5 and 1½ years. They are looked after by her mother-in-law while she is at work. As she cannot live on her *hazira* wage she does *ticca* and if that does not produce enough she borrows. She pays no rent and lives on *busti* land given by the garden. She takes an annual *girmit* of Rs. 6. She possesses land but does not know how much. It is worked by her brother-in-law on the *adha* system. She has no plough cattle but has one cow with a calf, has no goat but a number of hens.

(The witness withdrew.)

**NANEE DASI GHASI, woman coolie (PRULIANI),
 Meleng Tea Estate.**

Nanee Dasi, a woman coolie on the Meleng Tea Estate, states that she is married and lives with her husband and has no children. She has done to-day her full *hazira* and has earned Rs. 6 per month thereby. She is doing no *ticca* to-day. If she skiffs 120 trees, she gets four annas. She takes *girmit* money from the garden. She has *khet* land, two *halissa* (two-thirds of an acre). In answer to a question she states that when she takes *girmit* she cannot go away without paying the money to the Manager or giving up a cow or some property instead. Asked if she wished to run away she says, "If the Sahib allows me, then I can go." She prefers to stay on the garden. If she ran away, they will beat her and bring her back. Asked who would bring her back, she stated that there were *chowkidars* in the lines. Asked if she had ever seen any one beaten and brought back. She states that she has seen quite a lot of people brought back but it was a considerable time ago. When the question was repeated, she said that she had not seen it but it is what people say. Asked a third time if she had seen people brought back with her own eyes, she said, "No," but people say it is done. That is one of the reasons why she is afraid to go away.

She lives in the garden lines and owns two plough cattle and a cow. She was brought from her country by her brother and was married after she came to the garden. She was about 13 or 14 when she came to the garden. (The woman appears to be 19 or 20.)

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. R. H. S. OLIVER, Manager of Meleng Tea Estate.

F-2556. *Colonel Garbett*: How long have you been in tea?—I came out at Christmas, 1907.

F-2557. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How much are the men and women getting?—The men get Rs. 7 a month and the women get Rs. 6 a month.

F-2558. For doing what?—Whatever task they are given; that is apart from *ticca*.

F-2559. Tell us what the task is and how long it takes?—Double hoeing; a coolie who has been here over three years gets 15 *nals*, while up to three years he gets 12 *nals*. If it is an old coolie who has got 15 *nals* *hazira*, he does 12 *nals* *ticca*. A man gets approximately 5 annas a day for his *hazira* and 4 annas for his *ticca*; he is in a position to draw 9 annas a day. The women only do light hoeing. For pruning 40 bushes is the *hazira*; when they are skiffing they do 120 bushes and that is another 4 annas.

F-2560. How long does it take to earn 4 annas?—You saw them go away this morning. Monday is a morning on which they turn out late; on an ordinary week day they go away by 10:30, having finished their *hazira* and they easily finish their *ticca* by 2 o'clock. If you come back this afternoon you will be able to see whether I am telling the truth or not. I am now speaking of pruning. They do not go home for a meal, but they usually go straight on. Some people here are doing *ticca* pruning; they do 10 bushes for an anna. They will have finished by 2 o'clock; except during the plucking season very few people are out after 2 o'clock in the afternoon. These people would do 40 bushes *hazira* and 40 bushes *ticca* and get 8 annas. The women will finish their *hazira* in three or four hours; they are finished by 10:30 or a quarter to 11 most mornings.

F-2561. They start work about 8 o'clock—Yes.

F-2562. *Sir Alexander Murray*: If they do 6 days' work in a week it would work out at Rs. 1.8, and they would get *ticca* in addition?—Yes. If they have hoeing as their *hazira* task we give them some other work for *ticca*; we give them a lighter task usually, so as to enable them to earn an easy *ticca*. The double hoeing is the hardest work.

F-2563. *Colonel Garbett*: Light hoeing is more or less play?—Yes.

F-2564. *Mr. Cliff*: We have just been questioning a *sardar* named Kundhan Dome. Will you send us information as to the number of men working under him, his wages plus his rate of commission, and the total commission earned by him over a period?—The number of men under him varies. I am not at present directly in charge of the men. We try to have one *sardar* to 50 or 60 men.

F-2565. *Colonel Garbett*: I suppose the number of men under the *sardar* depends on how many people turn up to work?—Yes.

F-2566. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: When was the last revision in the monthly pay and the *ticca*?—The *ticca* is very elastic. That is specially so here because we are not a big company; it is just a private estate. The manager of the division sets a task; the coolie will probably say he cannot do it; then the task may be reduced. The task in pruning varies; it depends entirely on the style of pruning; the size and kind of bush.

F-2567. *Sir Alexander Murray*: When did you increase your rates?—I cannot tell you but I can find out.

F-2568. *The Chairman*: I suppose you send out *sardars* to recruit?—Yes.

F-2569. How many have you sent out in the last two years?—I should think an average of between 180 and 200. For 1928-29, 129 *sardars* were sent out; 113 *sardars* returned and brought back 192 new coolies.

F-2570. Do you lose many *sardars* who do not return?—No. Many *sardars* return after two years; they get an advance from the local agent, have a really good time in their own country and then come back. In 1928-29 we sent 113 *sardars*, of whom 39 have not returned up to date.

F-2571. Are those 39 *sardars* reporting to you?—Yes, they are reporting through the agency; I expect I shall lose about 20 of those who will not come back.

F-2572. They take it as a form of repatriation?—Yes, I suppose they do.

F-2573. And others take it as a form of long leave? They intend to come back but do not take much trouble in recruiting when they are there?—They do not take much trouble during the first year they are away. I know something about recruiting because I have been in the recruiting districts for two years running, remaining there three months each time and have motored round all the districts.

F-2574. We have been in the recruiting areas and we find there still lingers a prejudice against coming to Assam?—That is quite true.

F-2575. On the ground that it is so far distant?—Yes.

F-2576. Some of them tell one another that if they go to Assam they will never be heard of again?—Yes, they do. They will tell you that in Ranchi now.

F-2577. It has been suggested to us that one way of getting over that prejudice would be a universal system giving a right of repatriation at the expense of the garden at the end of three years. The object of that system is to give them time to learn the conditions and if they have come up as single men to bring their families up. It is suggested that if that were the universal custom the old prejudice would be removed and it would lead to much more free flow of recruits, possibly so much so that the gardens would be able to choose their recruits and not have undesirables sent up as sometimes happens to-day. Would you yourself be willing to establish a system if it were general for all the gardens by which they would have a right of repatriation after three years?—But you do not mean that they would have to stay here for three years?

The Chairman: No, not necessarily, but that they could claim repatriation at the end of three years?—Yes, I should imagine that would be a very sound thing.

F-2578. Then it would depend on the gardens generally making the coolies happy and contented both as to wages and other conditions and presumably the gardens would desire to have as small a percentage as possible claiming their right of repatriation when they have had three years' experience?—Yes.

F-2579. You yourself think that would be practicable?—Yes, I think it would be a very good idea provided everybody else did it.

F-2580. I am of course assuming that it would be general. Would not a system of that kind probably greatly reduce the expense of a *sardar* system if a smaller number of *sardars* were sent and each *sardar* brought back a larger number of coolies?—Yes, I think so. The tendency is for the coolies to be able to return to their country more freely than they did.

F-2581. Your garden appears to get a larger number of recruits per *sardar* than some gardens, but the result of the evidence we have had may be roughly stated in this way: one-third of the *sardars* do not come back but are lost to the gardens because they take it as a form of repatriation; the second third take it as a form of holiday with expenses paid and do not trouble much about recruiting; then you have the remaining third which are actual recruiters. Does your experience suggest that that is a proper estimate?—Yes, that is about right. When a *sardar* is sent recruiting in the first year he may bring up all his available relatives. As he has done well we send him again recruiting, but is then in the position of having brought up everybody he can bring. The *sardars* are now getting a little more calculating and they do not bring up all their relatives in the first year.

F-2582. *Sir Alexander Murray:* What do you do when you yourself go to the recruiting areas?—I generally make arrangements with the local agent, and when I get there I see my own *sardars* who are there. That is a very great help.

F-2583. From where do you recruit?—On both occasions when I went to the recruiting areas I visited Purulia, which is now no good, Ranchi, Jubbulpore, Allahabad, Bilaspur, Mandola, Seoni, Raipur, Cuttack and Burhanpur.

F-2584. *The Chairman:* Have you ever got into trouble for assisting recruiting?—No. I go there and see my *sardars*. I am able to go out and see the people from whom the recruits are to be drawn and let those people see what the sahib is like. The *suras* have not been in Assam a long time, but I think they will be found to be a good type of labour for the gardens. My object was to see their condition and learn how they live. One is amazed to find what a great distance coolies have to go from their villages to the depôts.

F-2585. *The Chairman:* Have you anything in the form of a leaflet setting out the conditions of tea garden work?—A question sheet is sent down to each local agent. But I do not think they are worth the paper they are printed on, because the *sardar* has told the people what the conditions are in the gardens and the coolies prefer to listen to him rather than to the local agent.

F-2586. *The Chairman*: We have been shown a statement which is sent out by the coal mines in Assam which states precisely all the conditions to which the recruit will be subject. I understand you have nothing of that sort?—No.

F-2587. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you think the recruit knows what is stated in this question sheet?—When he comes before the local agent the local agent asks him what his *sardar* has told him.

F-2588. Why is it so difficult to recruit?—Because India is opening up so rapidly and the labour is not available. For instance, we used to get a lot of *Ooryas* from Cuttack, but when I was at Cuttack I found that contractors were going from Cuttack to the United Provinces to get labour for a railway that was being built at Cuttack, while we were trying to get recruits from Cuttack.

F-2589. *The Chairman*: What you call the question sheet only relates to information about the *sardar*; the *sardar* himself is not supplied with information with regard to the garden?—No.

F-2590. *Mr. Cliff*: You have spoken of the long distance the coolies have to travel from their villages to the depôts.—Yes. If a *sardar* recruits a man, his wife and two or three children 300 miles from the dépôt, he has got to get these people to the dépôt somehow. There are no railways and he has to feed the people. Therefore, he has to have an advance before he goes to the recruiting areas. Also I think the overhead charges in the local agency offices are rather heavy and that makes the system expensive.

F-2591. *The Chairman*: How much do your recruits cost you?—Last year our recruits cost us Rs. 129 per head.

F-2592. You are above the average in respect of the number that your *sardars* bring back?—Yes.

F-2593. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You know the country very well, if you were a coolie would you prefer to come to a tea garden or remain at home?—I would sooner be here. When the coolie is in his own country there is no one to look after him if he is in trouble or in debt. I am not sure we are not tending to pauperise the coolie because everything is done for him and he has no need to look to the future. He lives absolutely in the present.

F-2594. *The Chairman*: Have you any *khet* land here?—We have 5,000 acres, 1,800 acres of which is under tea; the balance is *khet* and jungle.

F-2595. In how many years can a recruit hope to get *khet* land?—He gets it the first year. If it is new land it has to be broken down. He is paid *hazira* for doing it.

F-2596. *Mr. Cliff*: How much of that land is jungle and how much *khet*?—I should think roughly it is two-thirds jungle and one-third *khet*.

F-2597. *The Chairman*: What proportion of your men have *khet* land?—Two-thirds of them. We have had a very good harvest this year and two-thirds of the people have been away for five weeks cutting down jungle.

F-2598. Some of the men we spoke to who had not been here for a year expressed their wish to go back to their own country and bring their relatives back with them. How soon will they have an opportunity of going?—They will go in the month of January. Of course we cannot let them all go at once. We hold a meeting of them, a *panchayat*, and they elect 10 people to go down. They know their own people who have got relatives.

F-2599. That is the first we have heard of these people choosing their own representatives to go to their own country. Is that your own idea?—Yes; we have been doing that for three or four years. I think that is probably why we are more successful with our *sardars* because the rest of the coolies are not going to let people go down who are just going down for a holiday.

F-2600. *Mr. Cliff*: How long have you been manager?—I came here at Christmas 1907 as an assistant and I became manager in 1928.

F-2601. We asked one of your *sardars* what he did if men refused to come to work; he said they were not severe for a day or two, but if the men were lazy, after a day or two they were severe to them and the men were hit. Do you know anything about that?—No, it is strictly against orders. Of course the *sardar* might be a little *zabardast* (forceful) because the *sardar* gets a commission on the earnings of the coolies.

F-2602. One of the men told us that if the *sahib* goes round and sees the work is bad, if the *sardar* is there the *sahib* tells the *sardar*, if I may use the phrase, to "tickle them up" and if the *sardar* is not there the *sahib* hits them with his hand?—That is quite untrue.

F-2603. Do you yourself or the sahibs under you do that?—That is quite untrue. To begin with it would not pay.

F-2604. The *sardar* says that in order to get work done or in respect of bad work he uses the cane which I now have in my hand. Is that done with your cognizance?—No.

F-2605. Is it done with the cognizance of any of the sahibs under you?—He is not allowed to do so, but I do not say it does not go on. If coolies came up and complained the *sardar* would not be a *sardar* any more.

F-2606. It seems that a number of the men working on this garden, including the *sardar* himself, see nothing strange in this but take it as a matter of common occurrence?—No, that is wrong.

F-2607. *Mr. Clow*: We got hold of a *sardar* and a coolie on this garden and before the rest of the members of the Commission came we asked him if he beat the men with his cane; he said: "Oh, yes, he had to do it occasionally; otherwise how could he get the work done?" We then picked out the nearest coolie and asked him if he beat that man. He said: "Yes, at times, and he called the coolie over and started examining his back to see if he could find any marks, but he could not find any." Later on, when several other members of the Commission came up, we recorded evidence formally; he was then apparently a little nervous and said: "Oh, no, he did not beat them, but it was the sahibs who did it." Are we to take it that if a coolie gets lazy, or otherwise, it is not an uncommon thing for the *sardar* to use a little physical encouragement?—I could not say; all I can say is this: if a coolie complains that he has been beaten and it is proved up to the hilt that he has been beaten, the *sardar* is no longer a *sardar*.

F-2608. *Mr. Cliff*: You used a word which I am told means "forceful," and the *sardar* himself is quite frank about it; he says: "Yes, I have got to beat them when the work is bad." Can there be such a system in operation without it coming within your ken?—He might do so, but I do not think so: we rather flatter ourselves that we are in touch with the coolies here; I do not think it does obtain.

F-2609. On a garden of this size can this system be in operation without it coming within your ken?—No, it could not; I mean they would certainly complain if it happened.

F-2610. I see a good many people who are afraid to complain, as well as some who are not afraid to complain. It seems to me to be impossible for such a system to be in operation without it being within your knowledge?—Yes.

F-2611. Then do you know of it or do you not?—I do not know of any cases. The *sardars* are not authorized to do it; they have plenty of ways of twisting their tails without that.

F-2612. That is another phrase which might be interpreted as meaning "forceful measures"?—No one likes hoeing on a hill; it is hard work pulling land up a hill, and if a man has been doing bad work the *sardar* can say: "That is where you will hoe to-morrow." There are lots of ways of doing it.

The Chairman: Is there any definition of the word "beating"; it is a thing that may mean much or may mean very little.

Mr. Cliff: I am using the word "hitting"; I have not used the word "beating."

Diccan Chaman Lall: They explained that it was either by the hand or with the cane.

The Chairman: It might be the slightest touch, a mere reminder, or of course it might be something very serious.

Miss Power: One of the women made a statement. Perhaps the Secretary will read out that statement so that the manager may have an opportunity of dealing with it.

Mr. Dibdin (Joint Secretary): One of the women was asked: "Do you want to run away?" She said: "If the sahib allows, then I can go." She said she likes to stay here; if she runs away they will beat her and bring her back; in the lines there are *chowkidars*. She was then asked if she had ever seen anyone beaten and brought back. First she said she had seen a lot of people brought back a considerable time ago: then she changed that and said she had not seen it, but that is what people said. She was asked: "Have you seen people brought back with your own eyes?" She answered: "No, but people say it is done; that is one of the reasons why I am afraid to go away."

Mr. Cliff: There was also a reference to some little trouble which it was thought the manager should have an opportunity of clearing up.

F-2613. *The Chairman:* What was it?—Some people were taken away to an Indian garden. Their brothers, one of whom happened to be a *chowkidar*, went there and fetched them back from this Indian garden. One of the two brothers did give his sister a licking for going away. She had gone away with a man of another *jat*, that was what really made her brother angry. The man who had taken the girl away went into court and complained that he had been beaten by the manager; that was me. The Deputy Commissioner came out and held an enquiry and found out the facts of the case.

F-2614. This was a case of somebody taking a girl away without her relatives' consent?—Yes, and the man was of a lower *jat*.

F-2615. Then it was really a social matter?—Yes, it was really a case of enticement, but of course we could not prove it.

F-2616. *Diwan Chaman Lall:* How many people were involved in this?—I think there were two men who went away with two girls and one of the girls had a small sister. The man whose sister lost her caste happened to be a line *chowkidar* and he went to fetch her back; he did give her a whipping.

F-2617. *The Chairman:* What was the decision of the Deputy Commissioner in that case?—The Deputy Commissioner decided that their application was untrue and suggested running a case against the man who had laid the statement against me. I did not do that because it takes a long time running a case in Jorhat.

F-2618. *Sir Alexander Murray:* But, apart from that, have you any other instances of coolies leaving you and going away?—No. We have a lot of enticement going on the same as in all gardens, because we are surrounded by Indian gardens.

F-2619. *The Chairman:* Are they gardens which are not members of the Association?—Yes.

F-2620. *Mr. Cliff:* What do you say is the form of enticement?—As I said, it costs us Rs. 120 to land *sardar* coolies on the garden now. An Indian can easily afford to give Rs. 15 or Rs. 20 to any of his clever people who can collect people from round about, and that is what happens. They come back eventually in 9 cases out of 10.

F-2621. What would you say was the approximate number that would be enticed away in a period of 12 months?—From this estate probably 12 or 15 and in about a year's time I should say we should get about 6 back. My experience is that they come back in about that time. It does not cost this Indian anything to recruit and he gives them a bonus, advance or present of about Rs. 20. Rupees 20 is a lot to a coolie. I do know this happens, but only from what coolies tell me. At first the Indian planter does not deduct the advance from their wages and they go on until the *baboo* thinks he will collect the advance; that is when we get our coolies back. Then the *baboo* will send a chit to me saying he hears a coolie has come to Meleng and can he have him back.

F-2622. Have you or your Association made any representation with regard to this practice to the other gardens?—We have protested time after time.

F-2623. When you protest, what do they say?—If I find the coolies are at his place, I will probably write and ask him if they are working for him, and he will immediately write and say they are not there; he never sends them back.

F-2624. You mean they never acknowledge they have taken them?—They never acknowledge that.

F-2625. *Miss Power:* Are those gardens doing any legitimate recruiting in the recruiting areas through *sardars* or not?—I think Boloma garden did; there is an Indian agency.

F-2626. *The Chairman:* Do you pay the Rs. 12 bonus, or whatever you call it, at the end of a year?—Yes.

F-2627. Is any thumb print taken?—Yes, we do take a thumb print.

F-2628. Is any agreement attached to that?—No.

F-2629. *Mr. Clow:* Is that the form? (Handing document to the witness)—Yes, that is it.

F-2630. *The Chairman:* That is merely a receipt?—Yes.

F-2631. Do you think the men regard that as involving an obligation to work for another year?—No, they do not.

F-2632. We have had in some cases evidence to the contrary effect, that they do regard it as binding them for another year's work?—No. The agreement used to be for the year's work they were going to do; but now we are not too keen to give this. It has obtained for a long time and we hope it will stop; we do not give as many as we used to; sometimes they ask for it and we do not give it.

F-2633. *Mr. Clow*: Why do you take a receipt?—I do not know.

F-2634. I imagine you do not take a receipt for pay?—No.

F-2635. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Some coolies working in this garden told Rev. Saikia and me that they think they cannot leave until their agreement period of one year is over?—I should not think any of the people you were talking to this morning had received any money.

F-2636. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Two girls said they had received Rs. 6; we asked one of them about it and she said after she had got that Rs. 6 she felt she could not leave the garden for a year. Is not the case that you give it to some and do not give it to others; you leave it to them to come up and ask for it?—Yes.

F-2637. If it is based on last year's work, why not give it to everybody?—It is not for last year's work; it is for the coming year. I give it to a person who I think is a decent sort of person, who wants the money and should be encouraged.

F-2638. *The Chairman*: You do refuse it to some?—Yes; we could not afford to give it to everybody.

F-2639 On what grounds do you refuse: on the ground that they have not worked well during the past year?—Yes; it is just left to the discretion of the divisional managers whether it shall be given or not. It is a way of giving a bonus. For instance, when they are getting married we give it to them.

F-2640. *Sir Alexander Murray*: They do not get married every year?—No, but they may want to buy bullocks.

F-2641. What is the percentage of your garden that gets it?—No new coolies get it; no coolie gets it until his three years are over.

F-2642. *Colonel Garbett*: The idea, I take it, is to encourage good behaviour and good work?—Yes; if a man had been getting drunk and knocking people about and that sort of thing, he certainly would not get it, because the first thing he would do would be to buy Rs. 12 worth of *lanpani* and he would be a thorn in the manager's side for some time.

F-2643. *Mr. Cliff*: In most places in the world when you give a reward to labour you give it for work done, but this seems to be a reward for work anticipated; if a man has been here three years, why does he not get a bonus for what he has done in the past?—He is not worth a lot to us until he has been here three years; to begin with, he does not do the same amount of work as an old coolie.

F-2644. Why do you not give the bonus at the end of the fourth year for the fourth year's work that is done?

Colonel Garbett: I think the reply to that is this: in the old days we had to give agreements for work to be done and a coolie would get an agreement to work for one year. When agreements were stopped, if we had given the bonus after the year's work was done, it would have meant that the coolie would have had to go for one year without any bonus and that would have been a hardship on the coolie.

Mr. Cliff: Mr. Oliver is saying it is not a survival; that they come for three years under entirely different conditions and still get a bonus for work to be done in the future and not for past work.

F-2645. *The Chairman*: I gather that in your case it is partly one thing and partly the other; it is partly a recognition of good work done and it is also partly an encouragement to work for another year?—I do not think they look on it as an encouragement to work for another year. They are certainly very pleased to receive this money and I think it encourages them to behave.

F-2646. In your view is it as a rule well spent?—Yes, it is; it is a lump sum and you generally find a husband and wife will come up at the same time and ask if they can have it. They generally use it to buy a bullock or something like that. When they receive money daily they are apt to spend it. We used to pay for our plucking daily; we now pay for it weekly and we find they save more money. When they got their 6 or 8 annas for a day's plucking that was spent because it was a small sum, but when they get Rs. 3 or 5 in a lump sum they think twice before they spend it.

F-2647. One thing with which we have been rather struck is the limited amount of inter-communication between the garden workers and the people they have left behind in their villages. Have you yourself any system of encouraging the passing of letters and, if need be, remittances?—No; we have a post office practically on the garden and the peons deliver letters to the coolies.

F-2648. You do not offer any assistance to them either in writing letters or in remitting to their relations?—No, there is no organization here for that.

F-2649. Do you not think it would add to the amenities of garden work if they were helped in this matter, whether by paying for the postage of the letter or the services of a letter writer?—It might do, but as regards money I do not think it would; if you ask a coolie whether he has any money he will swear he has not.

F-2650. We have had cases of a man and his wife where the wife has been left behind and no letter has passed in 11 months?—I think a good bit of correspondence goes on; they will come and tell me that a cousin wants to come to Assam, and can they go and fetch him.

F-2651. I am only looking at every possible means of increasing the contact and preventing them from feeling so far away from their relatives, as is sometimes the case at present?—Yes.

F-2652. *Rev. Saikia*: If the *sardars* who are over the coolies do not understand the language of the coolies, how are they to know their grievances?—We arrange for that. You were speaking to a group of coolies this morning; the second *sardar* is a *saura* and knows their language.

F-2653. *The Chairman*: You always try to have a *sardar* who does understand the language of the gang?—Yes; as a matter of fact, that is what that second *sardar* is there for; he is no good as a *sardar*; he is simply there to interpret and explain things to the new coolies.

F-2654. *Mr. Clow*: The gang we saw apparently contained men from Oudh and Madras?—Yes, and Ranchi.

F-2655. I suppose it is difficult for a *sardar* to make himself understood by all these types?—The Ranchi man understands Hindustani, and the *sardar* you saw has worked here for a long time; they all pick up a little *Mundari*.

F-2656. *Mr. Ahmed*: I understand there is no school here?—There is no school on the estate but we have two schools to which the children go.

F-2657. Those are outside?—Yes.

F-2658. I understand you are in favour of starting a school?—We keep the other schools going; we supply them with materials to keep going and that sort of thing.

F-2659. That is very far away for the children to go?—No, it is not.

F-2660. *The Chairman*: How many of your children go to school?—I could not say offhand, but in the division that is nearest the school I should say about 20 or 30 children go to school and they are not regular in attendance.

F-2661. *Mrs. Rahman*: When the women are working in the factories is any provision made for the care of their young children?—We only have between 25 and 30 women working in the factory; that is in the sorting room; none of them have small children. We could not have small children lying about the factory, so we do not have women with young children in the factory.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. JAMES FRASER, Manager, Hunwal Tea Company, Mariani Division, Jorhat.

F-2662. *The Chairman*: You have a number of recruits who have just arrived? Yes.

F-2663. I understand they are short term recruits recruited for one year?—Yes.

F-2664. Is this the question sheet on which they have been recruited? (Handing the document to the witness)—Yes.

F-2665. The contents of this question sheet should have been explained to the recruits in the dépôts?—Yes.

F-2666. I see it guarantees 8 annas a day for stated maximum tasks. Then you say the garden is free from jungle and the soil is light. It says that 8 annas can be earned in 6 hours and double *hazira* guaranteed?—Yes, the double *hazira* is 8 annas.

F-2667. That is for men; for women 6 annas per day is guaranteed for the maximum tasks stated. It also deals with boys, and it says that boiled rice is sold to all coolies at stated rates?—At the present moment these rates are higher than the current price of local rice; we always keep some rice in stock but there is no object in the coolie taking it from us when he can buy it cheaper in the local bazaar.

F-2668. It says that sick allowances are paid at the discretion of the manager?—In consultation with the medical officer; it is exceptional when any sick coolie is not paid.

F-2669. It says that after one year a coolie will be repatriated at the company's expense; that is, presumably, if they desire to go back?—Yes.

F-2670. I see that some of these coolies have their women with them?—Yes, but that is rather the exception than the rule; we should like to see more women with them.

F-2671. When they come for this one year term do you find that many of them stay or do they go back at the end of their term?—Very few stay; they go back.

F-2672. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Who went down with that question sheet in this particular case of these coolies we see here?—There are 4 *sardars* here and there should be 45 coolies altogether. There are 20 in one lot. This woman, Christine, has recruited a man and a woman, her niece. They have all come together. A recruiter called Bolo, who has not returned, has sent up 20 coolies, the assumption being that he is going to stay down and send up or bring up more if he can.

F-2673. Of these 20 coolies in one lot, how many are men and how many are women?—There are 16 men, 3 women and 1 girl.

F-2674. Is Christine the wife of Bolo?—Yes; she also holds a garden *sardar's* certificate. She has come back with the batch on behalf of her husband and herself. A man named Johau has recruited a father and daughter with this lot. I am not yet acquainted with them as they were not here half an hour ago. Another man, Marcus, has recruited a total of 23 souls: 14 men, 7 women, a girl and a boy.

F-2675. Are all these for one year?—Yes.

F-2676. *The Chairman*: What has led you to accept these one-year recruits?—Want of labour.

F-2677. I suppose you would prefer to have them for a longer time?—Yes, I should much prefer it.

F-2678. How is it that they all go back at the end of the year; do none of them take to the life at the end of the year, or is it that they will come up again?—I am hoping that it may develop into a system by which they will come up for two or three years.

F-2679. Do you adopt this system in order to popularize your garden?—No, it is a makeshift to tide over bad recruiting years.

F-2680. *Sir Alexander Murray*: I understand that each of these recruits on arrival will get Rs. 5?—Yes, they have been paid Rs. 5 in the dépôt, and they get another Rs. 5 when they arrive here.

F-2681. Have any of the *sardars* come back with them?—Christine is the only *sardar* who has come back.

F-2682. *The Chairman*: What is your experience in recruiting, say, over the last two years. Do you keep a *sardar* book?—Yes, it is all on record.

F-2683. How many *sardars* have you sent in the last two years?—I could not say without reference; it is a large number.

F-2684. I take it from what you said just now that you are under-staffed?—I could do with more coolies.

F-2685. And for that reason you are trying this short term enlistment system? Yes.

F-2686. Is this the first batch you have had?—No, the first batch came in 1927.

F-2687. Then you have had more than two years experience of the short term recruiting?—Three years experience off and on.

F-2688. What has been your feeling as to the result of that short term recruiting; has it been satisfactory?—So far.

F-2689. But I suppose very expensive?—I forbid recruiting for 6 months; I do not want coolies for 6 months. Unless tea conditions are very favourable I consider 6 months coolies are a direct loss to the garden. I think the 12 months coolie is probably profitable: it pays us to employ them on those terms.

F-2690. But for so short a term as 12 months you take them because it is the best you can get?—It is the best I can get. I would like to be in a position not to have 12 months coolies; I would like to extend the period. I find they only want the work on which they earn most money; that is, light hoeing. A gang of old tea garden coolies who are familiar with the work more or less resent being asked to do any work other than light hoeing.

F-2691. Then you do think some of these short term recruits have been in Assam before?—Yes; I could not say how many, but I know particular cases. I had an interesting case this year of a coolie who was recruited for 6 months and during that 6 months I had sent him down on a license to recruit more coolies. He recruited some and came back; then he was repatriated at the expiry of 6 months. The *sardar* is entitled to a commission for recruiting; I do not pay the *sardar* the commission until the expiry of his coolies' period. If the *sardar* goes leaving coolies behind him, I give him a chit and make an arrangement that the money shall be paid through the Tea Districts Labour Association's agent at the office from which he is recruited. The men are quite willing to accept that arrangement and at the due date the money is sent by money-order to the Tea Districts Labour Association's agent. It is a commission of Rs. 5 per head. One man was repatriated on the 5th July, 1929; we owed him some money; he stayed in his country 15 days and then returned to the Budla Beta Tea Company for 6 months. This is the man's own story. In order that I should not have to send the money to Nagpur for him, he came down from the Budla Beta Tea Company with a chit from the manager and I paid him the money; he had only been 15 days in his country.

F-2692. Have you had experience of men who make a profession of going to and fro like that?—I think that is what is developing, more especially with the 6 months men. I do not think the 12 months men are so inclined to do it, but I think it is a ramp with the 6 months recruits.

F-2693. They have been clever enough to discover a way of making more money than they can make by hoeing?—Yes.

F-2694. Have you yourself been in the recruiting areas at all?—No.

F-2695. Then you cannot tell us to what you attribute this reluctance to come to Assam which obliges you to resort to this short term recruitment in order to supply your labour requirements?—I do not think the coolie ever came to Assam at any time unless he was forced to do so by economic pressure in his own country, a failure of crops or inability to pay his rent or some similar reason.

F-2696. We have reason to think they still regard Assam as a very distant place and feel that once they go to Assam they are not very likely to return. Would you be in favour of a general provision that all tea garden workers should be entitled to be repatriated at the end of a reasonable term, say, three years, in order to get rid of that prejudice against coming to Assam and to increase the flow of recruits?—I think generally speaking I would be inclined to be in favour of it. I do not know whether it pays with every type of coolie or not. These *Orangs* and *Mundas* seem to be more attached to their country than other types of coolies. I think they have always proved rather unsatisfactory settlers in Assam. They eventually go back to their own country.

F-2697. If you could, would you like to get all your requirements from workers who would settle?—Yes, certainly.

F-2698. Have you adequate *khet* land here?—We have about 300 acres under *khet* cultivation and about 1,000 acres which could be utilized for *khet* land.

F-2699. Therefore you have really ample land for those who will settle to have *khet* land in addition to their work on the garden?—We have a certain amount; I could not say ample land; each coolie might not get enough to grow his total rice requirements.

F-2700. At present how long is a coolie working here before he gets *khet* land?—We are quite willing to give practically any decent working coolie *khet* land.

F-2701. Soon after he comes?—Yes, if he is going to settle.

F-2702. Do you pay what is called the bonus, the Rs. 12 at the end of a year?—Yes.

F-2703. Do you pay it to all your workers?—No.

F-2704. Do they have to claim it?—Some have to claim it; some are paid. It is usually claimed; they usually know when it is the end of a year.

F-2705. Do they come and ask for it?—Some come and ask for it.

F-2706. Do you take any receipt from them?—No, there is no document at all.

F-2707. They come and ask for it, and if you verify the fact that they have worked for a year, you give it to them?—Yes.

F-2708. Is it Rs. 12 for a man and Rs. 8 for a woman?—Yes.

F-2709. What proportion of your workers have been on your estate for any length of time, such as 5 or 10 years or more? Have you a settled population of men who have been born here?—Yes, but any figure I could give would be very approximate without referring to the books.

F-2710. What is your annual loss which has to be made up by recruiting?—Probably round about 200, out of a total working population of about 2,000, say 8 to 9 per cent.

F-2711. You have, as I gather, a substantial semi-permanent labour force?—Yes.

F-2712. And it is only about an annual 10 per cent. that you require to make up by recruiting?—Yes.

F-2713. Do you lose workers here to other gardens to any extent?—Not to a great extent; our biggest loss is to a Government settlement called Borpathar where they are giving *khet* land to tea garden coolies, 60 or 100 miles from here. There is a small local loss to *bustis* on the fringe of the garden as well, but I think probably our largest loss is to Borpathar.

F-2714. Do you have many workers not on your tea estate who come in to work at plucking time and so on?—Very few; a few stragglers from the bazaar come in; there might be 20 or 30 a day.

F-2715. *Colonel Russell*: Have you a full-time medical officer?—We have a European medical officer for a group of gardens. In the district of the European medical officer there are 7 companies. We have three gardens and three hospitals here.

F-2716. There are separate hospitals on each garden?—We have three separate hospitals.

F-2717. Under charge of a garden doctor?—Yes. We have 4 garden doctors, two are qualified and two are not. One of those not qualified has been here a long time.

F-2718. Do you suffer from much malaria?—Yes, it is a malarious district; we get a great deal of malaria.

F-2719. Are you doing any anti-malarial work?—No; I would like to make a start but I have done nothing so far.

F-2720. What is the difficulty about that?—The difficulty is that I feel that the present state of medical knowledge and experience is not sufficient to justify any large expenditure. If we tea planters had done what the doctors have wanted us to do in anti-malarial work during the past 5 or 6 years, we should probably have squandered thousands of pounds to no purpose. Five years ago there was a wave of enthusiasm for anti-malarial work.

F-2721. But you are quite prepared to take it up?—I would like to make a start in a small way; I think something should be done.

F-2722. In other areas we have found that quite a lot is being done successfully?—We try to keep the lines clean and keep jungle down.

F-2723. Even then you may be doing the wrong thing?—Yes, we feel that.

F-2724. What are your birth and death rates?—For 1928 the birth rate was 38.8 per 1,000 and the death rate 31.4 per 1,000. For 1929 the birth rate was 29.6 per 1,000 and the death rate 23.6 per 1,000.

F-2725. What were the infantile deaths?—For 1928 the infantile death rate was 128.8 per 1,000 births. For 1929 it was 159 per 1,000 births.

F-2726. Have you got very much hookworm here?—It used to be much worse than it is. We have been doing continuous treatment every cold weather; the European doctor has a muster yearly in the cold weather and all the coolies are examined; it takes us practically all the cold weather to get through our labour force. We deal with any particular cases at any time in the year.

F-2727. What conservancy arrangements have you?—Nothing. We are building a new hospital here and are putting in a septic tank, and latrines.

F-2728. You have nothing in the way of latrines?—No.

F-2729. Do you think the coolies would use them if they were built?—I suppose in time they would be taught to use them; it would take a long time I should think. Some coolies will prove more adaptable than others.

F-2730. Is there any kala-azar here?—No; we used to have it.

F-2731. How long ago was that?—Five or 7 years ago.

F-2732. How is it that you do not have it now?—It has responded to treatment.

F-2733. You did have treatment here?—Yes.

F-2734. And your doctors are always on the look-out for it?—Yes. We have a modern water-supply with filtered water.

F-2735. *Mr. Clow*: Does correspondence come to the coolies from their villages?—Yes.

F-2736. Does it come to the office or is it delivered to the lines?—Sometimes it comes to the office; sometimes the *chowkidars* bring it and take it to them direct.

F-2737. We have been told that in some places the post office peons will not deliver letters to the lines unless there is a postage to be recovered?—Yes, I think that is the general experience, but I think that is getting a little less so. The last letter came through this office two or three days ago for delivery to the man in question. We put up a letter box outside so that the coolies can post their own letters. Any letter which comes here is delivered to the man and we arrange that he gets it. We have no separate organization for that.

F-2738. You do not find on the part of the post office authorities reluctance to deliver letters in the lines?—We are only a mile from the post office.

F-2739. Do they leave the letters here in the office, or deliver them to the coolies?—They do both.

F-2740. *The Chairman*: Do you not think it would improve the amenities of the garden workers' life here if you took an interest in correspondence between them and the people they have left behind in their villages, and facilitated it?—We do that to a certain extent. We used to have an arrangement, when we started these short term coolies for their money to be sent down to their country. It was sent down in the name of some member of the European staff and the receipt came back to him; but we have discontinued that now; the coolies seem to be quite satisfied with the ordinary channels of the post office.

F-2741. We came across a case where a man had left his wife in the country and for 11 months no letter had passed between them. Do you think that is a customary thing?—I should think it is quite likely. I think probably these 12 months coolies whom you have just seen keep in closer touch; they are only birds of passage.

F-2742. Do you not think it would be an aid to your recruiting if you yourself took an interest in increasing the communications between them by providing for letter-writing, or would they be suspicious of anything that was done to help them in that way?—I think they might be suspicious or unresponsive; I do not know that we could encourage them to write letters.

F-2743. It has not been tried?—I have never tried it. Generally I would encourage a man to write a letter if a man approached me in the matter; I should say that he ought to write to his wife, but I have never taken any active steps to see that he did write to his wife.

F-2744. *Colonel Garbett*: If he did write a letter it might not be delivered at the other end; that is the difficulty?—Yes. There is probably more trouble about that than there is at this end.

F-2745. *The Chairman*: It is one of the factors which lead other people who might become recruits to think Assam is so far away?—I think this system of short term recruiting will help to dispel any false notions the coolies have in that part of the country as to Assam because there is a continual flow of coolies up and down. It is only a certain type of coolie I want for 12 months.

F-2746. *Sir Alexander Murray*: They spend 16 days coming up and the same time going back; that is a month out of your year spent in travelling?—That is an objection I have with the Tea Districts Labour Association arrangements; I

mean to write to the Chairman of the Assam branch of the Indian Tea Association about the amount of travelling time which is deducted from the one year which the coolie agrees to work.

F-2747. At whose expense should it be?—I think we should split the difference and that travelling one way only should be deducted from the one year term. Coolies recruited on the 2nd January, 1929, have to be back at the dépôt on the 2nd January, 1930.

F-2748. *Mr. Cliff*: Do they get 12 months or 11 months pay?—They only get 11 months pay; they are fed on the journey and their railway fare is paid.

F-2749. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you not think 16 days is a long time?—It is a long way.

F-2750. Do you not think that is one of the things that prevent people coming?—I do not see there is any way of obviating that if they come from Jashpur; they are kept two or three days in the dépôt under examination.

F-2751. Do you always insist on medical examination at the other end?—That is done.

F-2752. *Mr. Clow*: Why does it take 16 days; the ordinary third class train would get here in 5 or 6 days?—It is not 16 days travelling.

F-2753. *Mr. Cliff*: What is the labour strength per acre on your estate?—It is 1½ coolies on the books.

F-2754. What in your judgment do you require?—It depends what you are wanting to do.

F-2755. We found some gardens had over 2 coolies per acre; could you do with 2 per acre?—I would probably find work for them.

F-2756. Would you like to have them?—Yes, I think on the whole I should like to have 2 coolies per acre; I would replant my old tea and open up new tea.

F-2757. What labour strength would you like for your present acreage?—I think about 2 coolies per acre on the books would probably guarantee 1½ coolies or 1½ coolies per day per acre; I think that would be ample.

F-2758. How do you pay your men?—Weekly.

F-2759. Is it a fixed rate?—No, it is according to a man's earnings; it is more or less a unit system.

F-2760. How long does an average man take to earn 6 annas?—It depends on the time of year: 4 to 5 hours; we reckon 1½ annas per hour.

F-2761. Is there much *ticca* work?—For 9 months of the year.

F-2762. Taking that 9 months, what would you estimate the *ticca* work average is per month?—I could not say.

F-2763. I would like to see the amount paid for *ticca* work over the 9 months in which you say they are asked to work *ticca*?—In the unit system there is no clear division of *hazira* and *ticca* work; on leaf, for instance, we pay a flat rate throughout the year of 2 pice per seer. Do you call that *ticca* work?

F-2764. *Colonel Garbett*: One might say the unit system is all *ticca* work?—Yes, it is all *ticca*. So that that would mean practically all their earnings except *chowkidars*.

F-2765. *Mr. Ahmed*: Is there any school for the children within the garden?—Yes, there are two schools.

F-2766. Within the garden?—Yes.

F-2767. How many children go to school?—We have had trouble in Mariani in getting children or anybody to go and we have started having the school at night.

F-2768. That is for men only?—No, for children; we have only just started that to try and encourage it.

F-2769. Is there any possibility of continuing it in the day time as well?—I am quite willing to continue it.

F-2770. How far away is the post office?—About a mile.

F-2771. I suppose this is a third class post office where the peons as a rule do not come to deliver letters in the interior of the district?—The postman delivers here in the garden every second day.

F-2772. Do you think a letter written in the recruiting districts will reach the coolie here?—I think it is likely, making allowances for the Indian post offices; you know what they are.

F-2773. Do you think there are other gardens where the peons will not deliver letters in the interior of the district?—I think it is quite likely.

F-2774. I suppose it would be a great help if the system were altered so that every letter were delivered to the man to whom it is addressed?—I think it would be an improvement.

F-2775. *Rev. Saikia*: Are there any Assamese on the garden doing coolie work?—Only on special jobs during the cold weather.

F-2776. Do you know of any reason why the Assamese working classes do not come and work on the garden?—I think the general opinion is that they are too lazy.

F-2777. In the Goalpara district the villagers work in the gardens; can you not get labour from the neighbouring villages?—No; we can get them during the cold weather for special jobs to do a certain amount for us, but they are not part of the regular labour of the garden; they only come here for a little while and then go.

F-2778. Do you think the reason why they do not like to come and work on the garden is because they think the wages are low?—I am afraid I cannot tell you the reason why they do not come to work on the garden.

F-2779. *Mr. Cliff*: Would you be prepared to take them if you could?—I should be willing to take them if they would come and work on the garden on the same terms as other coolies; I am quite prepared to employ them.

F-2780. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Have you any spare huts now available for housing coolies?—Yes.

F-2781. Where will these men who have just come up be housed?—They will be housed in the lines in the huts; we have several spare huts and we have some big sheds which we use for newly arrived coolies.

F-2782. You allot huts for them next day I suppose?—Yes.

F-2783. *The Chairman*: Do you as far as possible put them with people who come from the same district?—We try to arrange it, but it is not always possible.

F-2784. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: If a road is to be built along the lines or anywhere else, how do you arrange that; who builds it?—We build it.

F-2785. What sort of labour do you employ?—It depends what time of year it is; if it is only dressing a road we will probably do that ourselves.

F-2786. Is that part of the work that the coolies on the tea estate do?—It depends on the nature of it; we have just made a new road through the lines which has been thrown up by *Nunias*.

F-2787. Is there any sort of work of this kind which you get from the tea garden coolies for which you are not compelled to pay them and do not pay them?—No.

(The witness withdrew.)

CHRISTINE, woman *sardar* on the Mariani Tea Estate (Mrs. Rahman interpreted).

F-2788. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Are you a Christian?—Yes, and my parents are Christians.

F-2789. Where were you born?—In Jashpur in Ranchi.

Mr. Fraser (Manager): Christine is herself a short term coolie.

F-2790. *Sir Alexander Murray*: When did you come to the garden first?—I have worked 10 months.

F-2791. Do you and your husband intend to settle here?—No, I and my husband will return to our country and not settle here.

Mr. Fraser (Manager): She came up on the 18th March, 1929, and she went back with her *sardar*'s certificate on the 22nd October, 1929.

F-2792. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Why did you select her to go down as a *sardar*?

Mr. Fraser: Because we thought she would be a likely woman to recruit coolies and she wanted to go.

F-2793. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How much money did you and your husband get when you left your home to come here?—I did not get any money here but at Jashpur in Ranchi I got Rs. 10 at the dépôt.

F-2794. And what did your husband get?—My husband got Rs. 10 also. I got Rs. 10 as *khoraki*.

F-2795. Have you a mother and father in your village?—Yes.

F-2796. Is that at Jashpur?—Yes.

F-2797. Have they land?—Yes.

F-2798. Have your father and mother ever been in the tea gardens?—No.

F-2799. Why did you come; who brought you up the first time?—Etwa *sardar* came from here and brought me.

(The witness withdrew.)

**KUNDA (newly recruited Oraon coolie) on the Mariani Tea Estate
(Mrs. Rahman interpreted).**

F-2800. *The Chairman*: Have you a wife left behind in the village?—Yes, my wife is at my home, not here with me. I have come alone.

F-2801. Who recruited you?—Marcus *sardar* recruited me.

F-2802. What were you doing in your own country?—I was doing cultivation in my own home.

(The witness withdrew.)

**NANHU (newly recruited Oraon coolie) on the Mariani Tea Estate
(Mrs. Rahman interpreted).**

F-2803. *The Chairman*: Who recruited you?—Marcus *sardar*.

F-2804. What did he say to you?—The *sardar* said there was good work here, and the *baboo* in the dépôt told me that I should get 12 annas.

F-2805. Are you sure he said 12 annas?—Yes, he told everybody 12 annas.

Mr. Fraser: They mostly earn 12 annas.

F-2806. *The Chairman*: Do you know you have come to work for a year?—Yes, I know I have come for a year.

F-2807. Have you brought your wife here?—No, I have left my wife at home; I have only brought a son who is here.

F-2808. What is the boy's age?—I do not remember his age; I have got at home a boy bigger than this boy.

F-2809. Do you intend to go back at the end of your year?—Yes.

F-2810. If you like the life here, will you bring your wife here?—No; if it is all right I may think of it, but otherwise I will not bring her up.

F-2811. Were you medically examined?—Yes, the doctor examined me and I was vaccinated.

F-2812. *Mr. Ahmed*: Were you told that your boy would get anything?—They told the *chokra* who is entered in the *challan* as 10 years of age that he would get boy's work; the *baboo* did not tell me what the boy would get.

F-2813. Did you get Rs. 5 at the dépôt?—Yes.

F-2814. What else did you get?—We got Rs. 1-12 for *khoraki* (food).

F-2815. Did you get clothes?—We each got a blanket.

F-2816. How long have you been on the journey?

Mr. Fraser: The challan is dated the 3rd January.

F-2817. *Sir Alexander Murray*: When did you leave your own village in Jashpur?—It is 16 days since we left home. I left my village on a Monday. We stayed 3 days in the dépôt and left on Friday (3rd January). We were in the dépôt Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

F-2818. Which way did you go?—From the dépôt I came on foot; I walked three days and then I got to Lohardaga. I was Saturday, Sunday and Monday on the road to Lohardaga. (6th January).

F-2819. When did you reach Gauhati?—I do not know.

F-2820. Do you expect to get any more money now you have arrived here?—Yes, Rs. 5.

(The witness withdrew. The Commission adjourned till 14th January, 1930.)

ASSAM.

Fifty-fourth Meeting.

JORHAT.

Tuesday, the 14th January 1890.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (*Chairman*).

| | |
|---|---|
| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | DIWAN CHAMAN LALL, M.L.A. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. | L.T.-COLONEL A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S. (<i>Medical Assessor</i>). |
| MR. JOHN CLIFF. | |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA | |
| L.T.-COLONEL H. C. GARRETT, Superintendent, Kanjikoah Budli Beta Tea Co., Ltd. | } <i>Assistant Commissioners.</i> |
| MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN | |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. | |
| M. A. DIBBIN | |

Mr. K. CANTLIE, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar.

F-2821. *The Chairman*: What is your experience in administration in Assam?—I came out in 1910, but my experience in tea districts has been very limited. For two years before the War I was in charge of a subdivision in Sylhet, where there were gardens, and on my return from the War I had a year's experience in North Lakhimpur, where there were a few gardens. Except for that, for practical purposes, my only experience has been for about three years in this district, during a time of great anxiety owing to shortage of crops and flood damage, when all my spare time was spent in assisting people. My tea garden work has had consequently to be compressed into a minimum of time, although as a matter of fact I have inspected all the gardens I had to inspect, and I have done what I could.

F-2822. What are your duties with regard to tea gardens?—I have to inspect each garden once every two years. I have to report on the hospital accommodation, water-supply, housing, the amount of tasks and the wages. That report has come to be a formal standard report. Most of my time is taken up by going through the wage returns, because I think it is important that those returns should be accurate. Very often it is difficult to check the wages return because it is drawn up by a clerk with many house servants and various tea house mistries included. I always sit there until I am convinced that the return is approximately correct for all practical purposes. It may take me a very long time, but I think it is my duty and I always do it.

F-2823. What staff have you to assist you in your work of inspection of tea gardens?—None. I do it myself for the headquarters subdivision. I inspect about 30 gardens a year. For my subdivisions I have subdivisional officers who each do their own subdivision.

F-2824. Are there any other *ex-officio* inspectors?—The Superintendent of Police is available, and I believe he does inspect some gardens in some places.

F-2825. Have you experienced any difficulties, in adequately inspecting all the tea gardens, that you would like to put before the Commission?—In this district I have been constantly overworked for all the time I have been here. There has been a continuous shortage of staff. The inspection of tea gardens, so far as the main points to which I have just referred, are concerned, is almost a routine matter in respect of good gardens, because in good gardens the hospitals, the lines and so on are all more or less one like another.

F-2826. You would not suggest that all gardens come up to the standard of the best?—Certainly not.

F-2827. Can you suggest any way in which inspection can be improved with a view to bringing all gardens up to, or towards, the level of the best?—At present there is no power at all except that of stopping recruiting. In cases of new labourers who have lately come and who make complaints, or who are unsuitable, I can repatriate them, but it is very difficult to know what are the rights and wrongs in the matter.

F-2828. What power have you in connection with those gardens which you are convinced are not up to the standard which they should be?—No power at all except to stop recruiting. For instance, in connection with the garden which the Commission visited the other day, at which I presume the Commission did not find the conditions satisfactory, the recruiting in 1926 was one *sardar*, in 1927 nil, in 1928 12 *sardars*, and 1929 one *sardar*. The stoppage of recruiting in that case, therefore, would mean nothing to that garden.

F-2829. Does it mean that where a garden relies on transfers from other estates you have no remedy?—I have no remedy at all. Such a garden need put up no hospital, or need have no water-supply or lines, or anything else so far as I know. .

F-2830. Would you be in favour of some improved system which would give to you greater powers of bringing the less good gardens up to the better standard of the good gardens?—Yes, I would. There is a feeling of helplessness amongst inspecting officers, which has made inspection a routine work.

F-2831. Would it assist you if there was some kind of Board of Health and Welfare?—I think it would be of the very greatest assistance, because its opinions would carry weight and publicity.

F-2832. You think such a board would be a helpful agent in levelling up the standard both of the health and general welfare of the gardens?—I do.

F-2833. Have you thought of the possible constitution of such a board?—A welfare worker must be a man with planting experience. I think such a man chosen by the Tea Association possibly, specially for the purpose, with the *ex-officio* powers of an inspector, would be the most suitable appointment that first comes into my mind.

F-2834. Such a board would be closely allied in its work with your own duties with regard to gardens?—Yes.

F-2835. On the one hand it would be an agency in contact with you as the administrator of the district, and on the other hand in contact with the persons responsible in the different tea garden estates?—Yes.

F-2836. Were you here in 1921-22?—No.

F-2837. You know nothing about the troubles that led to the Labour Enquiry Committee's report?—No.

F-2838. Is it your opinion that since the report of that Committee in 1922 there has been a considerable improvement in the condition of the garden workers?—Yes. The hospitals have very much improved; water-supply has improved, and there is much more attention paid to children. The gardens are now paying much more attention to what they call their future labour supply, which will depend more and more upon the children which are being brought up in the gardens.

F-2839. In the Government of Assam's memorandum stress is laid on the need for improving the standard of living so that the garden worker will want more, and will be prepared to work for it, and make good use of his earnings. Have you any suggestion to make in what direction that higher standard of living should be looked for?—It is a difficult matter. I am always being told by managers that there are a great many labourers who will earn just sufficient

for the day and nothing more, so that raising the task rate has no effect upon their general condition. I am told that that is the great obstacle to the raising of wages. The standard of living according to the older planters has gradually risen, but what more to do is very difficult to say. The general idea is that it all depends upon education. A great deal of money is spent in drink. That is the curse of many of the tea garden population.

F-2840. In your view is more money spent on drink than is desirable?—In some gardens, yes.

F-2841. Is that among the older men or among the younger men?—I do not know that there is much difference between them.

F-2842. In the course of your inspections do you look at the schools on the estates?—Yes. None of them are doing very well. I do my best to encourage schools, but I always receive the same reply, namely, "Yes, we will open schools, but if the parents have a boy at school his earnings are likely to be diminished, and therefore the parents are not very keen on it". There is a miserable handful of schools everywhere, and education has made no progress at all.

F-2843. Do you think a special type of education in these tea garden schools could be devised, which would be directed to the practical aspects of life in the gardens, such as agriculture and natural history, so that the schools would not be turning out non-manual workers?—I cannot say. I have met many people who are educational reformers, but when I ask them exactly what they want to do they generally find it very difficult to give a definite answer. It is extremely difficult to know what to do.

F-2844. Do you think that the suggested Board of Health and Welfare, on which experienced planters would be represented, might help to plan a system of education peculiarly suited to tea garden children?—That is the only body who would be able to do so; but so far as I know the matter has defeated every manager who has tried it.

F-2845. Would Government be prepared to assist in a scheme of that kind?—I have no doubt that they would. Resolutions are always being passed and disappointment expressed by the Director of Public Instruction.

F-2846. *Mr. Ahmed*: Is it not a question of the Government not having sufficient money?—In the Jorhat subdivision only of this district the demand for aided schools is met. In the Sibsagar subdivision the demand for two more schools will be met next year. In the Golaghat subdivision I find that there is a demand for ten aided schools on gardens, and probably only two of these can be opened next year for lack of money. The total number of full Government and aided tea garden schools is eleven. The number of schools maintained entirely by gardens is twenty-five.

F-2847. *The Chairman*: With regard to recruitment of garden labourers, under the present system of *sardari* recruiting to what extent have you exercised your powers of repatriating, at the garden's expense, garden workers who were unhappy or unsuitable or discontented?—To a very small extent. About 20 Nepalese were sent back to Calcutta from Boloma Tea Estate. They were repatriated at Government expense. Two or three were repatriated from an estate of the Jorhat Tea Company. They complained that their time had expired and were not allowed to go back. It was found that there was a genuine mistake on the part of the manager as to the date of the expiry of these men's contracts, and they were sent back. Then there were four or five repatriated in another subdivision.

F-2848. Why were they not repatriated at the garden's expense?—Because it was found that the Nepalese was not a native of India and we could not force the manager to pay the expenses of repatriation.

F-2849. You have certain powers to repatriate at a garden's expense?—Yes; but I have never had to exercise that power. The manager has always sent the men back after I have enquired into the case. He has said to me: "I am willing to leave it to you. If you think I ought to send them back I will do so". That is the general attitude.

F-2850. Generally speaking you have found the managers very ready to repatriate where their attention is drawn to any cases where you think it ought to be done?—Yes.

F-2851. The Commission has been considering a suggestion of a right of repatriation at the end of a reasonable period—that is to say three years—during which sufficient opportunity would have been given to the garden worker

to see how far the life here was suitable and congenial; and the suggestion has been that if there were an universal right amongst garden workers it would have two effects: on the one hand, it would remove the lingering prejudice in the recruiting areas and possibly greatly increase the flow of would-be recruits, and on the other hand it would lay an automatic obligation on all tea planters to make the conditions such that at the end of the three years the choice of the garden worker in the very large majority of cases would be to stay on and not exercise his right of being sent home at the garden's expense. What would your opinion be of such a scheme?—I think it would be very desirable. I think that the repatriation should be carried out by the garden on which the labourer was working at the end of his three years. Repatriation at present is not at all satisfactory. A man says "I came up because I thought I would get a rupee a day. I got a rupee a day in Ahmedabad and I would not have come here if I had not thought that I should get Re. 1 a day". I do not know whether the man is speaking truly or not, and I write down to the labour dépôt, and I get a reply saying "Everything was carefully explained to the man". What is one to do? I had a case in which two obviously unsuitable men were repatriated from the garden by the manager. They were part of the orchestra at a circus. They were Muhammadans, but they told the recruiting officer at the dépôt that they were Hindus, because, they said, they thought they would more easily get to Assam if they said that. They admitted that the officer at the recruiting dépôt had told them all about the matter and that they understood, but that they did not pay much attention to him. However, now that they were here they wanted to go back because they said they had been badly treated. That was a case in which the men were repatriated; the garden was glad to get rid of them at any price. In other cases you get men coming up quite genuinely and saying "We have made a mistake". Under the present circumstances I can do nothing for them. If I were to disbelieve the officer at the dépôt I might as well repatriate a thousand and one. I frankly confess that I do not know what to do. These men are brought before the recruiting officer, and I believe they are told quite properly everything about the matter and they consent to come. If after they come here they do not like the conditions, naturally they are going to tell me all sorts of stories about what they thought they were going to get. So far, in the few cases I have had, I have felt bound to rely on what the dépôt officer told me, and I have refused to repatriate.

F-2852. Under the suggested three years' scheme there would be nothing to prevent earlier repatriation of undesirables?—Your suggestion would do away with the present difficulty. I think it would be a very good thing. As a matter of fact I do not see why it should be a very expensive matter for the gardens. I think if the Railways were approached by Government a system of free return passes for coolies from Assam could easily be arranged.

F-2853. The great advantage of a system such as we have had suggested to us, giving a definite right to return at the end of a reasonable limited period, is that there would be hundred per cent. contented labourers on the gardens of Assam?—Yes.

F-2854. You think a three years' system would speedily work towards the ideal of free recruiting, free movement, and free labour in every respect?—I think it would be the first step in that direction.

F-2855. Mr. Clow: When you visit a garden has the manager a right to accompany you?—I do not think so, but generally he does accompany me.

F-2856. I take it that, with the manager present, the coolies would be reluctant to put forward any serious charges against the manager?—It might be so, but I am always in court at other times and a coolie can come and see me if he wishes to do so.

F-2857. But apparently in some gardens it is not very easy for the coolie to get as far as your court?—There may be interference in some gardens, but a coolie who wants to get away can generally do so. Take the case of the man you saw at Boloma the other day. He is the last of a batch of 12. The other 11 ran away; so they do go from a garden if they wish to. If a man wants to go away, he can do so more easily than the evidence would lead you to suppose. In that particular garden there has been a considerable ebb and flow of labour.

F-2858. We have not been able to see the more distant gardens, some of them separated by several days' march from proper means of communication?—I do not think there are any such gardens now. They are all on the roads, and the labourers can get into headquarters within a day.

F-2859. Our inspections, particularly the one at Boloma, left me with the uncomfortable feeling that there might be gardens in which the King's writ hardly carries?—It might be so in the case of one or two gardens, but you must remember that that particular state of affairs seen by you only exists on some out of a total of 10 per cent. of gardens outside the Indian Tea Association and engaged in enticing.

F-2860. My point is that even if it exists on 2 per cent. it is a serious matter?—Yes, it is, but Mr. Withers and I held an enquiry last year on that particular garden at which the manager was kept at a distance. We asked the coolies if they had anything to say and nobody said anything.

F-2861. *The Chairman*: If in visiting these gardens you had representatives of a Health and Welfare Board would not there be greater freedom on the part of the workers to make representations?—I think so, because knowing that I am a magistrate the workers may possibly be in fear of me too.

F-2862. *Mr. Clow*: Would not an ordinary magistrate, whose administration depends to a large extent on the tact he exercises, be a little reluctant to adopt inquisitorial methods on gardens in regard to which he had no particular ground for supposing there was anything wrong?—Yes. The ordinary magistrate in charge of a district does not go round looking for complaints. Therefore, it is possible that in certain places he may not know all things which it would be advisable for him to know.

F-2863. To some extent a special officer who had not to consider the effect on the other sides of his administrative work would be in a stronger position?—He would be able to devote much more time to enquiry—probably private enquiry—as to whether there was anything wrong. The only private enquiry I make is when I walk along the road and talk to the coolies I meet. I have never discovered any cruelty.

F-2864. So far as enticement is concerned, I understand that it is easier to entice coolies at places like railway stations or *hats* than inside the gardens?—That is so, but the *chowkidars* do come into the lines at night and get them back. The relatives often come and get them back. I have heard of motor lorries being driven into the lines at night and large numbers taken off to very distant places. The coolies have had the right to go. They have said afterwards that they were promised all sorts of things which they did not get, and they have all come back again. No matter what regulation you have, it will not prevent their being taken away by large promises, which are not fulfilled very often and the people come back again.

F-2865. On the other hand, if Government were to prevent what is called enticement, would not the hands of the bad gardens be strengthened by further limiting the extent to which competition prevails?—That is so. The agreement between the gardens not to employ each other's labour is, *prima facie*, bad. The only cure is to get plenty of labour. The labour districts must be brought quite close to Assam. If we could get as much and as cheap repatriation as possible it would be one way of getting a free ebb and flow of labour, and it would overcome the present state of things in which the coolies' wages are depressed by the present methods.

F-2866. You are not in favour of prohibiting attempts by one garden to get another garden's coolies?—No.

F-2867. *The Chairman*: You think that if the obligation of repatriation at the end of the third year was put on the last garden in which the man is working and not on the garden which brought him out, it would to some extent remove the temptation to entice?—It might do a little in that direction. That is why I suggested it.

F-2868. *Mr. Clow*: Assuming there is this right of free repatriation after a fixed period, how could it be guaranteed that when a coolie's term had expired he would not be kept in the garden against his will?—It would be necessary to have a check by the Deputy Commissioner or by somebody to represent the Deputy Commissioner. That is why an *ex-officio* Inspector or a welfare worker is required. It might be done by a system of returns, but then on his visit the Deputy Commissioner would have to parade everybody, at which parade the labourers might say they did not want to go back, but at night they might come to him and say that they did want to go back.

F-2869. Would it not be possible to overcome the difficulty by having a system whereby those coolies with the right of repatriation were registered,

and whereby they were compelled to go and make an agreement at headquarters if they were to be kept on after the period?—Yes, it would be much better than doing it on the garden.

F-2870. And to make it a serious offence to employ a man beyond the three years if there was no registration of agreement to that effect at headquarters?—Yes, that is quite a good idea. It could be done at headquarters. It would be a nuisance for the industry, but it would be much better than having abuses. I think it should be done at headquarters.

F-2871. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Is it a practicable proposition?—I have not thought it out. I would prefer to have repatriation at more frequent intervals than only once in a man's life.

F-2872. *Mr. Clow*: The effect of repatriation only once in a man's life would be that all would go if they knew it was their last chance of getting home?—It would be so, but I do not think it is a bad thing that once in their life they should go home.

F-2873. My point is that practically nobody would stay on unless he was given leave to go home for a period?—I do not think it ought to cost much to send him home, and I think it would be a good thing.

The Chairman: It would not necessarily interfere with the home leave. It would be an additional and absolute right.

F-2874. *Mr. Clow*: My point is this: if the right were at the end of three years, and not ultimately, every one would exercise the right—at any rate temporarily—at that time?—Yes, but the man could be sent down as *sardar* at the same time.

F-2875. Have you any reason to suppose that the coolies who are at present brought here on short term contracts are in any case kept after their term has expired?—No, it would not pay the manager to do that. If a manager started that it would get known, and he would not get any more short term labourers.

F-2876. I mean where his activities were unknown?—It would be a very foolish policy on his part, and the Assam Labour Board would soon jump on him. I have known cases where managers have sent all their short term labour back although many of them wanted to stay on. The managers sent that labour back because they were afraid of the idea getting about that they were keeping them on.

F-2877. Would it be safe to introduce a system of free recruiting for coolies recruited for only one year. By "free" I mean entirely uncontrolled and unregistered?—You are taking me out of my depth, because I do not know anything about recruiting.

F-2878. Is it a fact that there is considerably less risk of abuses in the cases of coolies who have been in Assam recently?—Yes.

F-2879. Does a large proportion of this short term labour consist of coolies with previous experience of Assam?—I should not think so.

F-2880. As regards the repatriation scheme, can you suggest how to overcome the difficulty that might arise of cases of dismissals? You see there is a possibility of an unscrupulous manager dismissing a considerable number of coolies a short time before the period of repatriation on the ground that he found something unsatisfactory about their work?—The repatriation must be automatic. If a coolie was unsuitable it was the fault of the manager for having recruited him.

F-2881. The manager might say that the coolie proved insubordinate or gave trouble in the garden?—I do not think we can go into such details. We have no staff to look to whether the man was right or not. The repatriation should be automatic.

F-2882. Have you much experience of inspection of factories?—I inspect them as far as I can. I am an amateur.

F-2883. Do they employ young children in the factories?—In 1928 I found three people employing some young children, and I prosecuted and fined them. The tea house factory is a difficult thing; it is split up into two, part factory and part non-factory, and children often run from one to the other. But there is no serious employment of children contrary to the Act. There is a mistake in the last factory inspection report of Assam. I think that is what you are referring to?

F-2884. The Assam Government refer to some inconsistency between the report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and the figures he has given of the number of children employed in factories?—With regard to that point I addressed all the managers of tea gardens and I have got replies from most of them. They say they made a mistake in including in the annual returns which they sent to the Inspector of Factories children over 15 years who are not paid a full man's wage, and those children who are employed in the leaf house which is away from the manufacturing house.

F-2885. If the leaf house is actually a part of the same establishment, I think that unless it is clearly shown that one part is separated from the other by a wall and there is no access from one to the other, it is, for the purpose of the Act, a part of the factory?—The leaf house is entirely separated from the manufacturing house; it is outside the building.

F-2886. Are you in favour of bringing it under the Factories Act?—I think it would lead to depriving young boys of work which they are suited to and from which they can earn a moderate wage and driving them out on to much the same work on the tea garden fields outside. I do not think that the danger of coming into contact with machinery is sufficient to have a distinction made.

F-2887. There is, of course, no machinery in the leaf house at all?—No, but it is quite close to the factory.

F-2888. Are the hours longer than the stipulated hours of work?—I do not think so. It is always done in shifts, and that is a great difficulty in inspecting. There are three or four boys where you require two, and they come and go as they like. I have never discovered that any boy was worked unduly. There may be such cases.

F-2889. *Miss Power*: Could you give us any idea as to the number of times each garden would be inspected in the course of a year?—Only once in two years unless you have got a high death rate; if the death rate is 7 per cent. and above you have got to inspect it once a year.

F-2890. Has it been possible for you to carry out that amount of inspection?—Yes.

F-2891. How often do you think a garden should be inspected? Do you feel it should be inspected more often than is the case at the present time?—I do not think so. It is not the number of times you inspect; it is to know what to look for or what to find out. If there was any fault on the garden you are not likely to find that out by inspecting twice in the year any more than once.

F-2892. What sort of "follow up" is there after inspection of a garden in which malpractices have been discovered?—If there is anything that we think that should be done, say in regard to hospitals or water-supply, we send a copy of our report to the manager. If it is remedied we get a reply from him, but he cannot be forced to remedy it.

F-2893. Is he not compelled to take any action on your recommendations?—No.

F-2894. In the case of the Boloma garden did the manager there carry out any of the recommendations that you made in the previous year?—No. I pointed out to him that he had no good hospital and his water-supply was bad. I have not been back again. If he does not carry them out I cannot do anything.

F-2895. Is it not possible to make any recommendations to Government if a particular garden is considered to be below the mark?—My report is always sent to the Commissioner. This system has been going on for many years.

F-2896. Are the Commissioner's powers not greater than yours?—No. He sends it back to me saying that the defects should be pointed out to the manager.

F-2897. Does the same thing apply if something unsatisfactory is again found on the second as on the first occasion, as I understand was the case on this garden?—If it comes under the criminal law I prosecute the man. In this case I prosecuted the tea garden clerk who assaulted the coolie. Otherwise there is nothing that I know of that can be done.

F-2898. Reverting to the question of schools, supposing the tea garden managers agree not to employ children under a certain age, say 11 or 12, do you think it would have an appreciable effect upon the number of children who would voluntarily attend tea garden schools?—You may get a boy to attend when he is seven years old and give him primary course training, but at the

age of 15 he would have forgotten what he had already learnt. There is one difficulty you will have as you will not be keeping them till they are 14. But if it did really permanent good to the children you might get the managers, I suppose, to encourage children to go to school when they were six years old and keep them until 10, because that is the time when they begin to labour.

F-2899. Have you any suggestions as to how the children on the tea gardens could be brought into any educational scheme other than by means of Government compulsion?—If the type of education could attract the little children themselves, I think it would succeed; but I speak as an amateur.

F-2900. Do you think it would be possible also to have some scheme for the education of the adult tea garden coolie?—If it attracted him, yes, but I would not like to give an answer on that point; it is quite a new thing to me.

F-2901. You see the attitude of the tea garden employer towards trade unionism is that the coolie is not yet fitted for propaganda of that kind because he is not educated. At the same time there does not appear to be any serious attempt being made to educate either the child or the adult. I am asking you whether you have any views as to how this particular step in the coolie's evolution as a citizen can be achieved by other than Government compulsion?—I think that to deal with the children is the best method, but if there is any scheme of adult education that is suitable, somebody who is more in touch with the labour might be able to suggest one. I know it is apparently the chief thing that should be done, but I cannot see what progress can be made; at present it has been very disappointing.

F-2902. Is there any prospect of compulsory education being actually enforced in the tea gardens in Assam in the near future?—It depends on what has been done in the villages. We are now trying compulsory education as an experiment in one revenue division in the Golaghat subdivision. I believe there have been protests to the Government against it from oppositionists, and its success is still doubtful. If it has taken several years to start it in one mouza it is going to be a very long time before it can be done in the whole of Assam. Until we see what its result is we can hardly criticise the tea gardens.

F-2903. Do you feel that any welfare board that might be set up should also deal with the question of wages, on the basis of a minimum wage for instance?—I do not know on what basis they could deal with it, but I certainly think that they should.

F-2904. Do you feel that some sort of regulation is required as regards wages, to compel for instance every garden to pay not less than so much per hour?—Speaking roughly, I think that the standard of wages over all the gardens is about the same; it is paid on the basis of a similar amount of work done. Until the industry moves as a whole, if there was any necessity to move, I do not know whether anything can be done in that direction; but, of course, there are certain gardens—particularly some Indian gardens—that pay lower wages.

F-2905. Such a regulation would compel them to come up to the level of the others, would it not?—You cannot always say so. Some of the gardens pay less total wages and yet the coolies are very contented because they have rice lands.

F-2906. Every one has not got rice land. In the case of those who do not have rice lands or other concessions, do you feel that the rate of wages is too low?—The average coolie family is one man, one woman, two-tenths of a working child, one non-working child, and one adult dependent. Between them they make Rs. 23-8 a month.

F-2907. Is that based on their working full time?—That is the general average earning at present, if they do their full work.

F-2908. Have you any idea as to how many hours they have to work in a day to earn that?—Perhaps it may be six hours, but in any case it is not more than eight hours.

F-2909. Apart from the question of the number of hours a coolie is prepared to work, do you think that the remuneration at the rate of 1½ annas for a man and one anna for a woman per hour is adequate for the work done?—The man plus the woman and child have more surplus than the third of the four classes into which for statistical purposes the villagers of Assam have been divided, that is, affluent, comfortable, humble and distressed. They get rather more than the humble; I think they are nearer to the comfortable than to the humble.

F-2910. They are not actually up to the level of the comfortable?—Where they have rice lands they are.

F-2911. But in those gardens where there is not sufficient *khet* land for them?—They would be down below the comfortable and towards the humble.

F-2912. Where do you feel they should be?—As a Government official I cannot say. If I were to say that the tea garden labourer should at least be in the second class we would be told that all our villagers should also be in the second class.

F-2913. *The Chairman*: I understand that there is a re-settlement report of this district. Could we have a copy of that report?—Yes.

(A copy of the report of the Settlement Officer, Sibsagar, on the economic condition of four villages in Sibsagar district was handed in.)

F-2914. *Miss Power*: Some of the managers imply that you cannot have any wage regulation unless you can compel a fixed task. Do you agree with that?—I would not like to answer an expert question like that. I suppose not; I cannot think of any other reply to give.

F-2915. On page 7 of the Chief Inspector of Factories' report for Bengal and Assam for the year 1928, he raises the question of tea dust. Could you give us your experience in regard to that in the factories here?—I visit many of the factories in the cold weather when the machinery is not working; but of those seen working I have been struck occasionally with the amount of dust. Usually the factory is in a very high open place, but in some which have been built more elaborately with partitions you do get a good deal of dust. Some of the partitions are due to the new factory laws.

F-2916. *Mr. Clow*: Do you not visit the factories when they are working?—Yes, I do. I also visit them when they are not working.

F-2917. *Miss Power*: The report states that the enclosed air trunk system is the ideal system for clearing off the dust and that one or two factories have already adopted it. Do you suggest that there should be an alteration in the Act which would compel these factories to have some form of dust extraction?—It is a matter that could be considered by the expert Factory Inspector for Assam.

F-2918. *The Chairman*: I take it that the Inspector would have power to call for fans if necessary?—I cannot tell you.

The Chairman: The Indian Factories Act does give power for an Inspector to call for fans.

Miss Power: The report says: ".....it has not been possible to obtain figures to show the effect on health caused by the inhalation of tea dust and fluff. The consensus of medical opinion, however, is that the dust, acting as an irritant, is liable to cause throat and lung diseases."

The Chairman: Yes, but it does not suggest that it is outside the powers of an Inspector to call for fans. My reading of the Indian Factories Act is that he has such power. The only thing it suggests is that apparently experts have not agreed on the method to be adopted in this behalf.

F-2919. *Mrs. Rahman*: It seems that in most of the gardens the coolies do not yet know that the Breach of Contract Act is no longer in force. Is there no way of letting them know that they are free at the present moment?—I have limited myself to speaking to coolies and have asked them whether they knew that they could not be put into jail, and they told me that they knew about it. I had thought of going round to the labour force and telling them that, but I could not have said anything except that there was no agreement. If I had told them that there was no agreement and the very next day the manager had put them all under a civil agreement which is a perfectly legal agreement, my face would have been blackened; that is why I did not do that.

F-2920 As far as I can make out, many of the labourers do not know that they are free and can go wherever they wanted to go?—That is quite probable because the Act unfortunately ended at the end of the year instead of at the beginning, and they went on with the old contract system. You have noticed in evidence that nobody knows what to call it; some of them call it by one name and some by another, but there is no case brought in my court of a manager trying to get back by bringing a civil case on it. We know of these bonuses, and I have written of them as such in my inspections. If any trick was ever tried I would not only dismiss the case but would run the manager ~~for~~ thousands of rupees for failing to stamp the document.

F-2921. Colonel Garbett: The Commission was told on Saturday by the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Assam branch of the Tea Association that the labour rules were framed by the industry in order to assist the free movement of the labourers. Why are you under the impression that these rules act in a contrary direction?—It seems to me that they do. It does not seem to me that there is much flow of labour between gardens that I know of; I may be mistaken. I see that on one garden the same labour force continues from year to year; I do not see gardens exchanging labour very much.

F-2922. The idea of the rules, I think, was that if a labourer wanted to leave one garden and go to another the new garden could employ that labourer, but all that it was asked to do was to refund the importation expenses of the original garden. The rules were framed to assist the free movement of the labour?—That might have been the intention.

F-2923. Rev. Saikia: Are the in-patients in the hospitals that are under the control of the tea gardens fed by the company?—Yes.

F-2924. Are they fed properly?—I think so. The managers look at the rice account, and there is, I think, one European medical officer who sees by a special accounting system that no abuses occur and that all people in the hospitals are properly fed.

F-2925. Colonel Russell: I would like to ask you if you could explain to the Commission a little more fully what exactly you meant by the Board of Health that was suggested; I am not quite sure as to what constitution you have been thinking about?—I had no previous intimation that I was to give evidence.

The Chairman: That was our suggestion.

F-2926. Colonel Russell: Some of the gardens are perhaps not officially unhealthy but still have comparatively high death rates. A Board of Health, whatever its constitution, would have to deal with gardens where, for instance, there are a large number of deaths from malaria. Would you favour the appointment of public health officers on such a board?—Yes, certainly; it will be most valuable.

F-2927. As far as I can see, in the province of Assam, there is no properly developed official public health service?—There is public health inspection service.

F-2928. There is a Director of Public Health no doubt, but obviously he cannot go round the whole province of Assam to inspect. Would it not be advisable for the Government to develop a public service of its own to start with; for instance, you might have medical officers of health for every district?—There is what is known as a sanitary officer for small towns; there was one here employed by the municipality.

F-2929. That is not quite what I was thinking of. Of course there would be a medical officer of health in towns, but for each district where tea gardens lie would it not be advisable to have a district health officer, and would he not be a suitable person to be put on the Board of Welfare and Health?—Yes, but I do not think that the inspection of the medical side of the gardens would be enough for a whole time medical health officer; if he were a district medical officer of health it would be a different matter. But I do not know whether he could not also attend to the villages.

F-2930. Apart from the question of attending to health questions in villages, a well trained health officer with some experience would be of use in controlling the health of unhealthy gardens?—Some of the gardens, of course, have got very highly qualified European medical officers and some have very good Indian medical officers, and I do not know whether they would welcome any supervision.

F-2931. But supposing he was attached as an official member of such a board as has been envisaged?—He might take the whole valley.

F-2932. We got evidence yesterday from Mr. Fraser of Mariani garden in which he said that if he had followed the advice of some medical officers during the last five years in connection with the anti-malarial work he would have lost large sums of money with little effect. I quite agree with him in that respect. Supposing you had a medical officer of health who was well trained in anti-malarial work, anti-dysentery work and anti-kala-azar work, would he not be a value to the industry as a whole? Do you think the tea industry as a whole would welcome the addition of such officers?—I think they would only

oppose on the ground that they have got sufficient expert medical men at present, but otherwise I should think that they would welcome a man of that type.

F-2933. The ordinary medical officer on the gardens, as far as I can make out, with certain exceptions perhaps, is more a general practitioner than a public health officer and is more acquainted with the treatment of sick individuals than with preventive medicine as such. Would it not be better, therefore, to have a separate organization for dealing with purely preventive work?—I think so, because his voice will carry more weight with the agents in Calcutta who alone have to pay the money. I think it would be a very good idea.

F-2934. Supposing you had boards of health for groups of gardens, say, 10 or 12 or 14, would it not be advisable also to have in each of these groups a large central hospital which was well equipped, well staffed, provided with nurses and so on, so that the patients instead of being treated in some of the very shabby little hospitals that we have seen on various estates might have more up-to-date treatment?—I have heard that there does exist in the province a central hospital in which the treatment and the equipment is much in advance, of anything that can be got by dealing with the gardens entirely individually.

F-2935. While speaking with certain managers I have been told that there would be great difficulty in getting coolies to come from an outlying garden into a central hospital. Do you anticipate that there would be very much trouble in that respect?—I could not say, but there might be. There is often trouble to get them into a hospital at all.

F-2936. That could perhaps be got over to a certain extent by allowing a proportion of their relatives to accompany them to a central hospital?—That is so.

F-2937. Do you think that that would interfere with the labour force to any large extent?—I do not think so, but it is a question of detail which the manager would be in a better position to answer.

F-2938. *Colonel Garbett*: Do you not think that if there was such a central hospital situated some distance away from the garden and a sick coolie transferred to that hospital it might tend to set his family household on difficulties?—There would be difficulty for them to visit the patient as often as they desired, but I think the suggestion was to send only serious cases to such a central hospital.

F-2939. *Colonel Russell*: That is so. My suggestion is that for all serious cases, like operations and perhaps midwifery cases, there should be a well equipped hospital with properly equipped wards and first class medical attendance, where these cases could be dealt with. Do you see any other difficulty in such a proposal?—Just the reluctance of the labourer to go to a distance from his garden. That could be only answered by a manager with experience. I would not like to give an answer to that.

F-2940. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Could you tell me what the actual increase in the payment for *hazira* has been since 1922? What was the rate in 1922 and what is the rate to-day?—I have got figures for 1924. For this subdivision, it was Rs. 9-12-11 for men and Rs. 8-15-1 for women.

F-2941. That is the actual wage?—Yes.

F-2942. But have you got figures for *hazira*? For instance, we are told that for *hazira* a man is paid 6 annas and a woman 4 annas. What I want to know is for a particular unit of work how much was paid in 1922, 1923 or 1924 and how much is paid now for the same unit of work. The unit, I understand, since 1922 onwards is practically the same, that is, between 25 to 30 *nals* in the case of hoeing?

The Chairman: Is it uniform or does it vary from garden to garden?—It varies, because you have got the unit system and the *hazira* system. I do not think I can reply to that.

Diwan Chaman Lall: It is not possible really to find out what increase there has been unless we take a particular form of payment which prevailed in 1922 and compare that particular form of payment with 1929, or let us say with 1928.

Colonel Garbett: You have Government returns.

Diwan Chaman Lall: But the Government returns do not give that information, and that is why I am asking this question.

The Witness: I think you could reach an adequate idea of it by just taking the difference in actual wage because you may take it that the amount of work done is about the same then as now.

F-2943. The 1922 Enquiry Committee in various places suggest that 6 annas which was the prevailing rate, for the unit system was a good wage. Could you give me an idea as to what was the prevailing rate for the *hazira*, taking 30 *nals* to be the amount of hoeing to be done for 6 annas, in 1922, 1923 or 1924?—Speaking without verification, and although I was not in the district, I am inclined to think that you would find it to be 4 annas in 1921; but I cannot tell you when the 4 annas rate was stopped and the rate increased.

The Chairman: That was shortly after the report of 1922 when the increase roughly from 4 annas to 6 annas was made?

F-2944. *Diwan Chaman Lall:* I think it was before 1922. In 1921, according to page 43 of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee's report, the men got a further rise to 5 annas a day. That, I take it, would be for the *hazira*?—Yes.

F-2945. If I take that to be the standard, then the increase, wherever there is an increase, because in some places it is still 4 annas, from 5 annas to 6 annas is also for *hazira*?—I cannot give you a reply without looking at figures.

F-2946. Do you think that the Government at Shillong might be able to help us with more detailed figures?—I doubt it. I think the Government has only got the total wage returns; I think it has got no other information than that.

F-2947. *Mr. Cliff:* Government receive a return dealing with the months of March and September. Is the purport and usefulness of this return simply for public information; does it go any further than that; has any action ever been taken on it?—Not that I know of.

Mr. Clow: The return is sent in order that the Government may watch the progress in wages.

F-2948. *Mr. Cliff:* My difficulty is this: The employers say that if they give more wages the people will do less work. If you ask for information, they tell you that the systems are so varied that you cannot prove it. I have had it from one settlement officer that with regard to the agricultural people they receive very nearly double the price for their produce that they received a few years ago. The only way of measuring this is to call for the total wages bill spread over a number of labourers in two periods in order to test it, and I wondered whether the Government through their Commissioners were measuring it in that way at all. Do they seek to do that for that purpose? Do you think you do that?—The information as to the wages is a most valuable thing in connection with the industry, and Government pays great attention to that. I think it is the best indication of the state of the workmen.

F-2949. My point is this: We have the employers saying that if you give more wages the people work less. If you have a labour force that is unable to express itself, does the Government seek in any way to measure whether the people are actually doing more work; do they take the total cost of the labour and average it over the number of labourers year by year?—Except for public information I do not know whether any actual use is made of the statistics. The garden itself tries to arrange its work in such a way that the labour force may be tempted to do more than it does. I think you may take it that except in times when there is no *ticca* work, every effort is made to induce them to do more work.

F-2950. The point I wanted to make was this: Every manager, or at least a majority of the managers, on tea plantations deal with the agents at Calcutta, and their records with regard to the estimate of the labour cost and in regard to other things are subject to scrutiny by the agents. But with regard to those estimates dealing with the wages cost, did the inspector ever go into them to see whether the statement that the labourers will not work harder if they get more wages is true or is not true?—I do not think it has ever been verified.

Colonel Garbett: To answer that question would it not assist you if you were to go into the figures of an estate and find out whether more labourers were absent recently than they were before?

Mr. Cliff: I think it would, but I noticed that the Tea Association in giving evidence kept away from that entirely; they merely made a general statement.

Colonel Garbett: I think we can prove it by our returns.

The Chairman: I think you can pursue it with the heads of the Indian Tea Association.

Mr. Cliff: Very well, Sir.

F-2951. *Diwan Chaman Lall:* What I was driving at was this: Taking Jorhat Sadar, the 1922 Committee in paragraph 109 of their report say: "In the Jorhat Company gardens situated in this subdivision, the wages in 1913 were Rs. 5 for men and Rs. 4 for women. These were raised to Rs. 6 and Rs. 5 in 1916. In 1920 and again in the end of 1921 or in January 1922, further increases were granted until the wages stand now at Rs. 7 and Rs. 6." Reference there is to the monthly wages; that is for *hazira* or for a fixed task that they had to do. Would I be correct in saying that this sum of Rs. 7 for a man and Rs. 6 for a woman is paid now for doing that particular fixed task?—The Jorhat Company's gardens may have adopted the unit rate some time after the period you refer to. I do not know, at that time, whether they were on *hazira* or on unit system.

F-2952. The Committee say: "In the remaining 2 gardens, the unit system with reduced tasks has been introduced."—I think the payment at Rs. 7 would be under the *hazira* system.

F-2953. That is to say they have to do a certain amount of work and they are paid on the monthly basis according to that amount of work. Yesterday when we visited the Meleng garden we were told by a coolie whom we questioned that he got Rs. 6-11 for the last month for doing the *hazira* work. If that is correct then has there been a drop from Rs. 7 to Rs. 6-11?

Colonel Garbett: That was the evidence of one man, and naturally it cannot be relied upon.

Mr. Clow: The difference is only 5 annas and it is quite possible that he might have been fined 5 annas.

F-2954. *Diwan Chaman Lall:* If, as Mr. Clow suggests, that man had been fined 5 annas, then am I correct in saying that the rate of Rs. 7 which prevailed in 1922 prevails even now?—There are so many factors entering into it that I cannot speak for any particular garden. I do not know whether the same amount of work is done for *hazira* now as was done in 1921; they might have reduced the amount of *hazira* for the same money. It is not a point on which I can give an answer without looking through the Jorhat Company's books and having their own information upon it.

F-2955. Would it be possible to get that information? I think it would be a very valuable information if we could get, for instance, the amount of work, that is the number of *nals*, that had to be done for *hazira* work in 1921 or 1922, the amount of work that has to be done now, the rate paid then and the rate paid now.

The Chairman: On a particular estate?

Diwan Chaman Lall: Yes.

The Chairman: I think we can ask for it as an illustration.

Diwan Chaman Lall: If it could be got from the same garden, that is from the Jorhat Company's garden, it might be more useful.

Mr. Clow: They have got 16 gardens; you have to specify the one you want.

Diwan Chaman Lall: The Committee do not mention the names of those two gardens to which they have made a reference in their report.

The Chairman: You better make a note of it and we will see whether we can get it.

F-2956. *Diwan Chaman Lall:* In the report of the Indian Tea Association for 1926 this is what they say: "That no superintendent, manager, assistant manager or other employer or agent of any garden represented in the Association shall engage or attempt to recruit or induce, directly or indirectly, any labourer or labourers from any other garden represented in the Association by offering higher wages than those current for the locality wherein his garden is situated or fixed by the Association." Would this restriction prevail for getting higher wages; suppose the employees on these gardens want to put forward a representation that they must get higher wages?—Your question speaks for itself. I cannot say anything in that respect.

F-2957. I take it that the policy of the local legislature has been to further the education of the coolies on the tea plantations?—From one or two letters

written by the Director of Public Instruction, and speaking from memory, I can say, yes; I can say that it is the policy of the Education Department to encourage schools.

F-2958. In July 1924 a resolution to this effect was passed by the Assam Legislative Council: "This Council recommend to the Government to require employers of labour engaging 30 children or more under the age of 14 in their estates, factories, mines, collieries, refineries, workshops, etc., to maintain one or more primary schools at their cost at such time and place and for such hours with such curricula as may be prescribed from time to time by the Department of Education, and to request His Excellency to undertake the necessary legislation immediately." Has any effect been given to that resolution?

The Chairman: That is rather a question for Shillong.

F-2959. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Mr. Cantlie, I would like to draw your attention to a case which is mentioned in the Labour Immigration Report for 1928:

"Just after the close of the year 50 coolies of Naharabi Tea Estate in the Sibsagar subdivision struck work demanding a rupee a day as wages. Armed with lathis they invaded the office compound and threatened the staff with assault. After an enquiry into the matter, five coolies, the leaders of the batch, were found to be responsible and they were arrested by the Police and sent up under section 143, Indian Penal Code. They were convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of Rs. 10 each or in default one month's rigorous imprisonment."

I want to know what the assault consisted in. It seems to me that apparently they went there to ask for an increase in wages.

Sir Alexander Murray: It is stated there, "armed with lathis."

F-2960. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Could we have the record in this case; could we have a copy of the judgment?—I will obtain that for you to-day.

F-2961. *Mr. Cliff*: In reply to the Chairman I understood you to say that the function of an Inspector was to examine wage rates, tasks, housing, hospitals, and water. Is that all the function of an Inspector?—That is his chief function.

F-2962. Does he examine the tasks to be done by the coolies?—Yes.

F-2963. I see from the Commissioner's report for 1929 that there is no observation on the condition of housing at all. Am I to take it that the conditions are generally satisfactory?—We report whether the lines are of the new type—iron frames and corrugated roof, or whether they are of the old *kucha* type. Once in a while perhaps they are being rebuilt and we make a statement about that in our report. The Commissioner who has been a district officer knows exactly what we mean. But we are not medical experts and we cannot say whether their situation is best. We can only see what the Commission saw: whether it is supposed to be good or the best possible standard of housing, is a matter of opinion. It has improved in my time.

F-2964. We went to a garden the other day. I think it was the first garden we visited. It was reported to be not in a good financial condition. A great many of the houses there were in a bad state of repair although this is the cold weather. Has not an Inspector got any powers and does he not report that the housing is in a bad condition?—Yes, he would put it down as being in a bad state of repair. But this is the time when they do their repairs. He would probably talk to the manager who would state his intention of repairing. He would make no reference to it in his report. The houses would be rain proof before the rains came.

F-2965. I am advised that this is the coldest part of the year. Dealing with housing, hospital accommodation and water, after inspection has taken place is there any provision for compulsion in regard to their improvement?—Legally there is no compulsion. But in practice the management, if it is a good garden, would carry out certain minor improvements. Inspections by me are always made after this time, that is towards the end of the cold weather or in the rains. I would not go down until the housing has been done properly. That is probably the reason why I do not make any remarks about housing.

F-2966. With regard to actual wage rates or actual tasks, are you in a position to know whether there is any change in the actual task or whether the basis is altered?—I write in my report that the rate was so and so last year and that it is so and so this year, e.g., deep hoeing rate was 12 *nals* last time, it is 10 *nals* this time. One garden may have a better soil than

another and the rates will vary accordingly. But the tendency is to reduce the task to be done and increase the pay. Beyond that I cannot say whether the task done in one garden is more or less than the task done in another.

F-2967. Take the question of bonus. I think you remember we went to a garden the other day where the old agreement was extant. It was not stamped, but thumb-printed right up to the end of last year. It seems to be a pretty common impression among the labourers that the old agreement is still in force. As an Inspector have you had any observations to make on that point to Government during the last three years?—Where civil agreements are taken I report to Government. In the case of the Boloma Tea Estate I reported that civil agreements were being taken and that they were thumb-printed. I also sent a specimen of the Boloma agreement to Government.

F-2968. In the case of the Rowriah gardens they were using simply the old agreement without the stamp. Would an Inspector report on that?—I report cases where civil stamped agreements are taken.

F-2969. Does Government take any action in respect of your reports?—When I put that in my report I did not consider that it was illegal or an abuse. At that time Act XIII had just ended and we were all new to what was going to happen. The gardens wanted to put their labour force under civil agreements and were taking legal advice. At first I thought that it was an illegal continuance of the old Act. But after reading that I thought rightly or wrongly that it was a civil agreement.

F-2970. *Mr. Clow*: Do they not require to be stamped?—Yes. The first ones I saw were stamped. They may be taking unstamped agreements now. In that case I will take action. I inspected books and saw if there was a reference to 313 days. If there was any I asked them to discontinue the practice. If I see unstamped agreements I will make them pay a penalty.

F-2971. *Mr. Cliff*: In the case of Boloma the agreements were stamped. In the case of Rowriah they were not stamped. They were all filed together and the wording was also almost on the same lines as the old agreement. I am only speaking from memory.

F-2972. *The Chairman*: We collected two agreements at the Rowriah gardens. It is a curious fact that the one on white paper is executed on 4th May 1929. It refers to this Rs. 12 and 313 days and requires the labourer in the absence of any reasonable cause to the contrary to perform such daily task and so on. The monthly wages are to be Rs. 8. Then there is a subsequent agreement on blue paper headed "Articles of Agreement." That is entered into on 21st December 1929 on the same estate. That says: "..... render him liable to the provisions of Act XIII of 1859....." and binds the coolie to perform 313 days work in consideration of the advance of Rs. 12.—I can only say that the garden must be using old stock.

F-2973. It looks like an earlier print?—I cannot interfere if it is a case of civil agreement. But if I see a reference to Act XIII I will take action.

F-2974. Would not the one on white paper require to be stamped?—Yes.

F-2975. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How can you say that it requires to be stamped. It is not a legal document; there is no witness; the other party has not signed it. How can you force anybody to stamp a document of that kind?—I could not answer that point.

F-2976. The thing is it has been intentionally left incomplete to serve a purpose?—It is rather a close point. I would not like to say more, because I will be the man who will demand a penalty for such unstamped documents. It is 10 times the stamp fee.

F-2977. *The Chairman*: We only draw your attention to that?—I am surprised to see that such a thing could exist. I did not do the inspection in 1929.

F-2978. The point is that some of the old forms are being used because they do not object to the worker carrying the old impression?—I think that the reply given on the garden was that they were using old stock.

F-2979. *Mr. Cliff*: With regard to the application of the Factories Act, as the industry has a great many exemptions from the Act, do you consider it suitable for tea plantations?—It is very difficult to apply.

F-2980. Why should there not be a special Act dealing with whatever amount of regulation the State considers necessary?—The present Act is extremely difficult to apply. For instance the children bring the leaf from the leaf houses across the road to the door of the factory. By law they ought

not to enter into the factory. They put down the basket at the door and somebody else takes it in. It is very difficult to prevent the boys from going into the factory and putting the leaves before the machine. There are breaches of the Factories Act by these boys. The plantations are working under conditions which are not provided for in the Factories Act.

F-2981. How long does the busy plucking season last?—I am told that people have to work on the 7th day in the busy plucking season and I want to get a measure of the time during which this lasts?

Colonel Garbett: It extends roughly over four months in the year—July, August, September and part of October. It depends on the weather to a very large extent. Sometimes the weather is very fierce and makes the leaves fall off the plant. If you leave the leaf very long on the ground it will make bad tea. That will, therefore, necessitate working a 7th day. But we try and avoid that as much as possible.

F-2982. I have seen the difficulty in making the tea garden worker know that the old agreement has been cancelled. Can you suggest any way in which the rights and privileges of the garden labourer may be made known to him?—So long as you have a civil agreement under which the labourer can be sued for the return of the money advanced to him, it is difficult to explain the position to him. Even if there is no civil agreement how could a coolie leave the garden when he has taken an advance from the employer? You will not be benefiting him by doing away with the civil agreement. The employer may lend him money for the purchase of cloth and utensils and so on and if the coolie leaves the garden without repaying that amount he can run a case against him in court and get the money. Unless you put an end to the practice of the coolie getting into debt I am afraid he cannot easily leave the garden. I do not suggest that advances are necessarily given with the object of keeping them here; they are also given to help them away from the money-lenders.

F-2983. *The Chairman*: In the last two or three years you have had no case of an employer running a case against a coolie for such advances?—None of this kind in Jorhat.

F-2984. *Mr. Cliff*: But how can Government make known to the garden workers what rights and privileges they have?—If you were to make all labour contracts illegal, including the present civil contracts, you would have a clear cut decision to put before the coolie and explain to him that he was not bound.

F-2985. How could that be done, taking that as an illustration?—To be quite frank, if I did that in a tea garden to-day there might not be any labourers there at all to-morrow; they might think that they have got an order to leave the garden and run away.

F-2986. That is one of the difficulties I felt the other day. I said to a tea garden manager, "May I go round and tell your people who do not want to stay here and want to go home that they can be repatriated"? The manager said, "You must not do it; it would create a disturbance." Suppose we adopted the alternative method of repatriation on good and sufficient grounds, as suggested by the Chairman; how are we to make the workers aware of their rights?—On this narrow point I may say that the workers who come here on 1 year or 2 years agreement know when they are to go home and keep that continuously in their minds. They know within a few days when they should go home. If a coolie is recruited on condition of repatriation at the end of three years I do not think there will be any difficulty in getting that into his mind.

F-2987. *The Chairman*: You say that if a specific period of three years were introduced and if this condition were made known in the recruiting areas these recruits would come up with full knowledge of their rights and be in a position to maintain them?—Yes.

F-2988. When that comes into practice, would not the remaining people on the garden—the earlier migrants, also become aware of their rights?—I do not think it will make any difference to them.

F-2989. *Mr. Cliff*: I am speaking on this point because on the one side you have got well educated and capable body of employers with all the advantage of western education and practice. On the other side you have uneducated, illiterate garden workers. I do not see at the moment any level platform between the two in which the two can equally exercise their rights. Assuming that certain rights are conferred on the garden labourer how are they to be made known to them?—I cannot think of any way at present.

F-2990. In the report on Immigrant Labour for 1929, there are two statements, one for each valley dealing with complaints from tea garden labourers and tea garden managers. With regard to complaints by coolies against managers in one valley there is a considerable number of complaints, whereas in the other valley there are very few complaints. Can you give reasons for the variation between the two valleys?

Colonel Garbett: I think the labour on one of the valleys is more settled than that on the other.

F-2991. Mr. Cliff: Could that be due to greater efficiency of inspection?—I can only guess that the reason is that more labour in the Assam Valley goes out to settle on waste land. But labour in the other valley remains in the garden as there is not much of waste land there. There will be, therefore, more people wanting to leave the garden in the Assam Valley and applying under the old system for what they call "name cutting chits." Probably most of these complaints are from people wanting to leave the garden. They say that the manager owes them so much, that they have taken so much advances and so on. They are generally returned to the manager and the matter is settled with him. If the complainant does not get satisfaction he walks away. That may perhaps explain the difference. I doubt if there is any variation in criminal matters such as assaults.

F-2992. What does this "name cutting agreement" mean?—When the old Act XIII was in operation the coolies used to take a certificate when they left the garden. The idea is still lingering that if they took a magistrate's certificate they could be employed by another garden or settle outside and that there was no chance of the manager bringing a case against them for recovering any money they owed to him. The old idea is still lingering as in the case of the bonus. I am only making a guess; I am not sure.

F-2993. Of the two gardens take Boloma first. Did any rumours come to your ears as to the conditions existing on the garden?—I was not satisfied with it when I inspected it in 1928. I heard that the coolies on the estate were not free to go and come as they ought to be. I went with Mr. Withers when there was the case of the Nepalese illegally recruited. We examined the people there and also the books for a long time. We generally enquired from the Nepalese and some other coolies, not in the presence of the manager; we got no complaints. I asked the people the day after you went as to what happened. They said that at that time there was a European manager—a fact which I had no knowledge of—and during his time there was no beating; but some of the clerks during the last three or four months have been rather harsher to them. When the European manager was there they were not restricted in their movements at all, but in the last few months there has been more driving of the labour and unwillingness to let them leave the garden. You saw the state of the garden—not properly cultivated. That was not the case when the European manager was there. We found that continual enticing of their labour has made their position difficult. They have been trying to keep their labour by trying to restrict their movements. That is my own impression.

F-2994. When we went to the garden the other day we were shocked to see the conditions there. Could a thing of that character go on without some rumour spreading among the people round about?—It was only by chance I heard of it. The *chowkidars* of that garden are to do any kind of recruiting they can and anywhere, including the one case we had from Calcutta. The *chowkidar* goes round the neighbouring gardens, meets there possibly one member of a family of workers and gives him an advance or perhaps an agreement and then hopes to get more members of the family or at least keep this man. Conditions are not what they are represented by enticing *sardars* to be, although they are better than you thought of them. The coolies get a little rice land; that is why the proprietor gets anybody at all. The other members of the family remain on the other garden and this garden manager fears that they will run away, or that the other garden will want to get their labour back again. Therefore, he puts the *chowkidars* on to prevent people coming in. This bad practice of enticing and re-enticing goes on only in rare cases, among the 10 per cent. of the gardens not in the Indian Tea Association, because the others are under the labour rules.

F-2995. Can criminal proceedings be taken against a person who beats a coolie?—Yes.

F-2996. By whom?—If a complaint is made to me I will take action.

F-2997. We went to Melang garden the other day. There was a *sardar* with a number of people around him whom he had caned and it seemed to be

a matter of every day occurrence. Is it possible for beating of that character to go on and be recognized as a matter of every day occurrence?—I go through tea gardens—their private roads—continually driving through. I have never seen any such cases; I have not heard complaints by anybody against a *sardar*. I think that will go on, human nature being what it is. It is likely to go on to a limited extent, that is to say to the extent to which the coolie gang under the *sardar* will agree—I used the word advisedly—to its being treated that way. If the *sardar* did what the gang thought to be cruel it would upset the gang and they would refuse to work. A complaint will be made to the manager. The *sardar* may survive a single complaint, but at the second complaint he is very likely to be dismissed, because he will be upsetting his labour by treatment of that kind. Same is the case with garden managers also. Keeping the labour contented is the great thing by which managers and *sardars* are judged now.

Mr. Cliff: It is a strange thing that some of these people were taking it as a natural thing, as a child beaten by his father.

F-2998. I understand there are two methods of payment to the *sardar*. The most common system is: you pay the *sardar* a salary and a commission on the earnings of the people under him. The second system is: you pay the *sardar* a rather higher rate and no commission. In your opinion would it be better to adopt the second system to prevent the possibility of any ill-treatment?—Theoretically speaking it certainly would be a better system. But whether it would be practically possible I doubt very much.

F-2999. Here is a difficulty which has been exercising my mind. If labour conditions in Assam are good and sufficiently attractive why is there a shortage of labour?—It is probably due to the cupidity of the human race. If a man has an employment offered to him with a slightly more cash remuneration, he is more likely to take it than an employment in which part of his remuneration will be adequate housing, pure water, a piece of land, firewood and other amenities. For instance taking an extreme case, the people from Bombay say: I get Re. 1 a day in the mills. I would like to go to any other employment which gives approximately that amount. The industries that pay a high cash wage have a tremendous attraction for any form of labour; and as the tea industry's wages are to some extent indirect they suffer to that extent from a handicap in the recruiting districts. I find that people are attracted by high pay more than anything else.

F-3000. Does that mean that the tea industry are more concerned with the moral welfare of their garden labour than their dividend, so that they give a good life to their workers?—The life of an agricultural labourer is somewhat different to that of an operative in a factory.

F-3001. *Colonel Garbett*: New industries, new railways and so on give labour in the recruiting districts some occupation at their own doors.—I do not know enough about the recruiting districts; but I find that there is a tremendous competition for labour as it is insufficient for all. Whether the tea industry by increasing the cash pay advertisements could proceed to tempt labour from other industries is a question which I cannot answer.

F-3002. But the tea industry has to face this stubborn fact that a very large proportion of their labour has been recruited in times of famine and that when famine conditions exist they get a larger supply of labour?

Colonel Garbett: That is true.

F-3003. Here is a life that is suited to the Indian agriculturists and in spite of all the money and effort the tea industry cannot get the labour it requires. It appears to me to show that the standard of life is not sufficiently good to attract an adequate supply of labour?

Colonel Garbett: Besides economic conditions we must not forget that we have a very bad climate. It has a lot to do with making Assam unpopular.

F-3004. *Mr. Cliff*: I agree with you. Is it not likely that measures taken in Assam itself to improve the standard of life of the garden workers will lead to a greater supply of labour than you have at the present moment?—I suppose you would get more labour if you pay for it. I remember before the War the wages of garden labourers in Sylhet were so low that I could not get any servant to work for me for those wages.

F-3005. *The Chairman*: Are they so low now?—No.

Colonel Garbett: We have not got a fair chance of recruiting labour. Act VI prevents even those who like to come from coming here. It is not

the condition of the garden so much as Act VI. All our troubles can be boiled down to Act VI. Before the Act we had the *sardari* and the *arkatti* systems. The *arkatti* system has been done away with; the *sardari* system is not capable of supplying our wants. It is not correct to think that the wages are low and conditions are unpopular. It is a matter of recruiting.

The Chairman: We have a proposal for widening the methods of recruitment through what we call accredited agents.

F-3006 *Mr. Cliff*: Government seem to be concerned with improving the standard of life. They believe that by improving the standard of life increased wages would follow. With regard to women labour, would it not be well that the amount of work to be done by a woman—if there is to be any serious improvement in the standard of life—should be gradually reduced?—I believe that this is the opinion held in western countries. You are probably thinking of higher mortality among the null girls and children of Lancashire. But that would not apply to agricultural work in a country in which women, of the kind employed in a tea garden, always take a considerable share in labour. In Assam they plant paddy and cut paddy. Among the people from whom tea garden labour is recruited, the women do considerable amount of heavy work. Your point is provided for by the grant of maternity leave on full pay by the better class of gardens. It is difficult to say, but I fear it will be importing western ideas into the minds of people which are not suitable here.

F-3007. It seems to me that in advanced countries the number of women employed on agricultural labour is always diminishing. Here we find that people live in the most primitive conditions. They have no depôts and they have to fetch wood. Generally speaking, they have to do all the things which are done for us in our countries. If the standard of life is to be raised must not the actual manual labour of the woman be reduced?—The work that women do on the garden is not an all day task. I would not like to say how far the amount of work that they already do interferes with their duties at home. Speaking personally I would like to see an increase in the earnings of the men, if at any time there is an increase in the earnings of workers in the tea industry. It is already satisfactory to note that in Dibrugarh for instance, the men are getting Rs. 17-3.

F-3008. All our reports and documents tell us that there are a large number of people who would not work. I am told in quite an incidental way that a woman will tell the *sardar*: “I would not do the full *hazira* to-day. I am going home to do the washing.” That is perfectly human and natural. But she is regarded as one of the women who would not work. If she has got household work to do and to bring up a family would it not be one of the ways of diminishing the work done by women to increase the wages of men?—I could not say more than that if increased earnings came to the workers in the tea industry I would prefer to see it come in the earnings of men.

F-3009. *Mr. Ahmed*: Do you not want additional inspecting officers if the gardens are to be inspected thoroughly and often?—If the point of welfare of the labourers is considered by the Commission, I am afraid the Deputy Commissioner can do nothing more than he does at present. He has no time to do more than routine inspections.

F-3010. You want a full time Inspector of Factories as they have in other provinces?—I understand there is a proposal to appoint one for Assam. He would inspect the factories from an expert's point of view. The Deputy Commissioner is quite incapable of inspecting the factories and gardens from the health point of view. An expert could do more than what a man with no technical knowledge.

F-3011. Do the Superintendents of Police possess the necessary expert knowledge to be able to do those inspections?—It is only in cases where the Deputy Commissioner cannot go that the Superintendent of Police is sent.

F-3012. In other provinces they have the District Health Officer, the District Medical Officer and a number of doctors attached to local boards. They go round the villages and inspect the sanitation and health of those villages. Would it not be great help if that system was introduced here?—I think the tea garden labour has at present many more facilities than the ordinary Assamese. It is much better looked after. Even the smallest garden has a compounder whereas an Assamese village does not get the same benefits. We would be insisting on a standard for the industry which is considerably in advance of that which exists in our own villages. The industry is an agricultural one; it is not a factory industry situated in a town.

F-3013. If the workers are given education, will they raise their standard of living and desire to do more work and earn more wages?—I cannot say. Education is the only solution we can think of.

F-3014. You think that they should be given a special kind of education with an agricultural bias?—I could not say. From the little I know of the subject I think that authorities on education are opposed to specialized education for children. They consider that the mind should be trained in general education.

F-3015. The children should be given elementary education between the ages of 8 and 12?—Since giving up the chairmanship of local boards many years ago I have not been in touch with education. My opinion is of no value.

F-3016. How do you say then that education will improve the workers?—I do not know except that education is supposed to make a man better, create more interests in life and more desires and in order to satisfy them it induces him to work harder.

F-3017. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: What is the average wage of an unskilled worker in the District Board?—I can find that out for you. I am not chairman now.

(The witness withdrew.)

**Dr. PERCY FOSTER, Medical Officer, Badlipar Medical Association,
Badlipar, P. O.**

F-3018. *The Chairman*: What is the length and nature of your experience with regard to health conditions on the tea gardens?—I have been Medical Officer to the Badlipar Medical Association for a period of 25 years, and I have charge of the tea estates which are members of that Association. All garden hospitals are visited by me once weekly, and if necessary more often. Medical reports are submitted monthly by me on the forms herewith shown. Medicines and surgical instruments are indented for from Home every six months by me. I have a central medicine godown, where all medicines are stored and which are challaned out weekly to the gardens on regular indents, which are signed and checked personally by me.

F-3019. Can you give us, in terms of population, the estates whose medical arrangements you supervise?—The average population of these estates is about 2,000. There are 7 gardens. The total population of the 7 gardens is 13,603.

F-3020. *Colonel Russell*: How many hospitals are there in these 7 gardens?—There is one hospital for each garden.

F-3021. How many beds are there in each hospital?—The number of beds is according to the average number of in-patients. Each case is provided with a bed.

F-3022. You can expand your bed accommodation as necessity arises?—There is a certain number of iron bedsteads provided, but a number of the beds are of the *charpoy* type, namely, ordinary coolie beds. The coolies seem to prefer those to the iron bedsteads which are provided by the gardens.

F-3023. Would it, in your opinion, be a better arrangement to have a large central hospital for the 7 gardens instead of having 7 individual small hospitals?—Undoubtedly the more the work is centralized the better, both for the concern and for the individual.

F-3024. It has been suggested that there would be a considerable amount of difficulty to get patients, particularly in an out-garden, to come to a central hospital. Do you anticipate any such difficulty?—There is bound to be a certain amount of trouble, which I think could be overcome to a very great degree if the managers realized it was necessary for them to urge the coolie to go into the central hospital in order to get better treatment. I have had experience of that in dealing with kala-azar epidemic in one district. I had no difficulty in getting cases from the surrounding gardens to come into the central hospital, and also from neighbouring tea estates where I had no control at all.

F-3025. That might be due to the fact that kala-azar is a disease of which they are afraid. Would the same argument hold good in the case of other diseases?—In regard to serious or special cases I think it would. If there is a main central hospital where the medical officer has to attend daily, it stands to reason that the work must improve. At present the medical officer only visits a garden once a week or once a fortnight.

F-3026. If you had a large central hospital, you would have better control over your subordinate medical staff, would you not?—Yes, and not only that, but financially you would be able to put better men in better positions. If there was a central hospital the present dispensaries would still have to be kept up on all the gardens, but they might be controlled by a subordinate staff instead of fully qualified sub-assistant surgeons.

F-3027. Are you satisfied with the present level of qualifications of the doctors?—Most of my gardens have the type of the sub-assistant surgeon.

F-3028. Have they registrable qualification in Assam?—Yes.

F-3029. We have seen in various places doctors who have practically no qualification or training. Is that at all general in your experience?—At one of my main hospitals I have a man of the compounder type who has now worked under me for a period of over 20 years, and he is doing, I consider, every bit as good work as a qualified sub-assistant surgeon. He has proved himself most efficient.

F-3030. Would you prefer, generally speaking, the trained sub-assistant surgeon?—Yes.

F-3031. What do you do in the way of child welfare work?—A special point is made, on all the gardens I visit, to muster daily between 11 and 12 o'clock at the hospital all mothers on child-birth leave. Hot water, soap, oil, etc., are provided and made use of daily under the supervision of the garden *dais*, who have received special training at St. Luke's Hospital, Chabwar. A list is kept to show whether they attend daily or not. All pregnant and child-birth pay is given at the hospital the day following the ordinary pay day. Extra leave and pay, or child-welfare challan work, is given to any pregnant women on the medical officer's recommendation in writing to the manager.

F-3032. How much in the form of maternity benefit is given to those pregnant women?—They are allowed on the garden to which I am referring, 4 annas a day.

F-3033. For what period?—There are two periods. They are allowed pregnant rest leave and pay, which is 4 annas a day, but that is only allowed on special recommendation. In the ordinary way the child-birth leave pay, which is 4 annas, dates from the day of birth for a period of three months.

F-3034. What is the special recommendation to which you have just referred?—If a pregnant woman is unable to do her full ordinary work on the garden, she is then recommended for some special easy work. If, for medical reasons, it is considered that she ought not to go out to work at all, she is then put on to the child-birth leave pay list.

F-3035. Would it not be better to give all pregnant women a definite period of leave before the child was born?—I do not think that is necessary. A number of these women are allowed pregnant pay and even special challan work, but they do not take advantage of it, and they come up to be examined, or to report, so that their names should go forward to the manager.

F-3036. *The Chairman*: Is it not a fact that some of the healthiest peasant women in Europe work up to the day before the child is born?—I know from my own experience that a woman has been at work up to within an hour of the child being born, and the day after it was born she was at work again.

F-3037. As a doctor do you not regard the light work before child-birth as an actual advantage, and extended rest afterwards as a real necessity?—Personally I do not think the work is so hard in the majority of cases to recommend that. It may be so during certain months of the year when the hours worked are a little long, for instance, in the plucking season, but apart from that the work is quite capable of being done by the majority of the women right up to within a month of giving birth to their children. I try to aim at giving a month's pregnant leave and pay before birth.

F-3038. Who recommends the month's pay?—The medical officer visiting the garden.

F-3039. You mention the employment of garden *dais*. What number of *dais* do you employ and what duties do they perform?—There are two *dais* on each garden. They are picked out from the *dais* who are working in the lines, and they do the majority of the attendances. The name of the *dai* is shown opposite each woman. At the date of birth a woman is recommended from these number of *dais* by the manager and the doctor and the medical officer. They decide between them which is the most suitable woman to be sent for special training. These women then go up to St. Luke's Hospital, Chabwar, where they receive special training. Their work on the garden is to attend daily the ordinary child-birth

leave muster. They do the washing and cleaning of the infants, under the supervision of the doctor. Directly a birth occurs in the lines the doctor gets the *hakim* to visit the woman. The next morning he gets a *dai* to visit the woman in the lines and to report daily on her condition and on the child's condition at the hospital. At the end of the 7th or 8th day the woman attends with her infant.

F-3040. How long has this scheme been in force?—For at least two years.

F-3041. Have you had any reduction in infant mortality as a result of this scheme?—I have not got out the figures for this last year, but they are available.

F-3042. You have some system of giving a bonus at the period when the birth is registered, have you not?—That would come under the heading of "Registration of births". To ensure this a bonus of Rs. 3 is given to the mother, and that bonus is paid within 7 days of birth provided the chit is produced from the doctor which states the date of the birth of the infant; otherwise a child might be born and die without any record of it in the garden books.

F-3043. How do you deal with the registration of still-births?—A list of all births is kept. Directly a woman gives birth to a child, if it is a still-born child the fact is written down opposite her name in red ink.

F-3044. Is it dealt with both as a birth and as a death, or is it recorded in a separate register?—It is recorded in the same register, and at the end of the year so many births and so many still-borns are returned.

F-3045. Do these still-borns appear in the death register?—They appear separately under the heading of "still-borns".

F-3046. In the return which you make to Government, do you count still-births in the percentage of births?—It is included on some of the gardens as a birth.

F-3047. You say "on some of the gardens". Is there no fixed practice?—One garden does it in one way and another garden does it in another way.

F-3048. Let me take your own garden first. When a child is still-born do you count that a birth?—Yes.

F-3049. In your return to Government does it go in as a birth?—Yes.

F-3050. Is it counted as a death under one year?—No, it is not returned as a death.

F-3051. It makes the return wrong if you register it in one column and not in the other?—These returns are made for the benefit of the garden, and the other returns are kept by the doctor for the benefit of Government.

F-3052. Does not Government lay down any rule on that most important question?—All I know is that I sign the number of births and I see the still-born list.

F-3053. Would you agree that the number of still-births is one of the vital signs of general ill health in any population?—They are returned by me under a separate column under my birth returns. I show the total number of births during the year, the total number of still-borns, the total number alive on the garden, the total number absconded, and the percentage alive on the garden at the end of the year.

F-3054. That is for the information of your gardens?—Yes.

F-3055. You are not required to send them up to Government?—No.

F-3056. I take it you would favour Government action to the effect that all statistics should be kept on one basis, taking still-borns out of both categories and treating them separately—taking them out of the births and out of the deaths?—Yes, I think that is much the better way.

F-3057. *Colonel Russell*: With regard to the welfare of infants born on the estates, you have a system of taking weights, have you not?—I make use now of the Government birth return book. On the one page I have the necessary information which is required by Government. On the other side I have the extra information required by the garden, namely, the weight of the child on admission, and at the end of one, two and three months and the date of vaccination. The death of an infant is also shown in column 4 in that register. The cause of death is also shown now in the Government birth return book.

F-3058. What other steps do you take to control the welfare of children born on the estates? For instance, how is the health of non-working children supervised?—We have very little control over non-working children because they are not seen at work, and they do not necessarily appear unless they come under observation during the annual inspection, which comes under the heading of the general

coolie welfare. Every year an annual house-to-house medical inspection is regularly carried out. The person's name is noted, as is also the general condition of that person, together with any remarks which are necessary. This is all entered in the hospital line coolie register, which is kept at the hospital. Various lists are compiled at this annual inspection and given under various headings so as to ensure the necessary treatments. For instance, a list is made of all coolies suffering from spleen, from itch, and from skin troubles.

F-3059. *The Chairman*: Are you speaking of children only now?—No, of the number of people who are inspected in the houses. All houses are numbered. The house number is noted, and then a list is made of where they live and the heading under which they have to be entered is also written up. The following headings appear: spleen cases, itch cases; pneumonia cases; general debility cases; leprosy cases, and there is also a list of orphans which shows the guardian's name. One's experience is that an orphan may be under the control of one person for six months and next year one finds it has gone to live with somebody else and nobody is responsible for its condition. Hookworm treatments are done as a routine matter at the general inspection which is done during the cold weather once a year.

F-3060. *Colonel Russell*: What about santonin?—Personally I think regular santonin distributions are most essential to reduce sickness amongst children and infants during the rainy season. I make a special point of having a register showing the date on which every child receives its santonin treatment, the result being that if a child comes under observation or some other complaint, the register can be referred to and it can be seen whether he has had the regular santonin distributions or not. The santonin distribution plays a very important part in the reduction of general sickness amongst non-working children and infants during the rainy season.

F-3061. Do you give sick pay to out-patients?—Out-patients are allowed 4 annas a day, male, 3 annas a day, female, and 2 annas a day, working child. In-patients get food and no pay. This is on the particular garden to which I am referring. But the in-patient is allowed a sick attendant—a relation who is paid the same rate of pay which he or she would get if he or she was working. The idea of giving that sick attendant pay is this: We might say to a coolie who brings up a child whose condition we consider is unsatisfactory: "You will not get your sick attendant pay because you have not brought the child in a satisfactory condition". It is to encourage them to bring the child or the patient under observation as soon as possible. The sick attendant *hazira* is signed by me on the in-patient ticket.

F-3062. *Mr. Cliff*: When you say "on the particular garden" do you mean the whole of the 7 gardens?

F-3063. *Colonel Russell*: No, he refers to one garden. Can you give the Commission a statement dealing with the daily food allowances for adult hospital patients?—The list I have here was sent to me by the sub-assistant surgeon. It shows what a hospital in-patient gets per day, and it includes rice, dal, salt, extra oil, spices, vegetables, and the quantities.

F-3064. You also have a list showing the feeding allowances given to non-working children. Do you feed the non-working children on your estates?—Any child can be fed at the hospital daily if it comes up, but certain children are recommended for feeding because their general condition is unsatisfactory. In order to ensure that such children get regular attention they are entered on the daily feeding list of the non-working children. That is checked by the compounder or the clerk daily in order to see whether they are attending and are being fed. At the same time they get the necessary treatment from the *baboo*. I have here the amount allowed for the non-working children (handing in statement).

F-3065. What is the average attendance of the children each day for that purpose?—It varies according to the number listed, but the average attendance is at least 30, out of a population of 818 non-working children and infants.

F-3066. Have you figures showing the annual deaths on an ordinary typical garden under different heads?—I have here the certificates of deaths from a main garden dating from 1919 to 1929. The following heads are shown: fever, convulsions, malaria, diarrhoea and dysentery, respiratory diseases, influenza, hookworm, round worms, infantile atrophy and other causes of death.

F-3067. *The Chairman*: In that period from 1919 to 1929 is there any appreciable increase or decrease in the death rate?—The total deaths in 1919 due to fever and convulsions were 12; in 1920, 12; in 1921, 10; in 1922, 12. In 1928 the figure was also 12, but in that year malaria was exceptionally prevalent. This year there were only 4, and the previous year there were only 5. Therefore, there has been a marked decrease.

F-3068. I am asking if there is any deduction which you are justified in drawing from the figures taken over a period such as that given as to whether there has been a general improvement in health or not?—This year the figures show up remarkably well. They are the lowest on record.

F-3069. *Colonel Russell*: You have also available a statement of your hospital expenditure?—Yes. A book is kept by each garden of the hospital expenditure on in-patients. The items are shown under the following heads: the year, the daily average fed, and the total amount expended throughout the year on food only: The amount expended on milk is shown separately, as is the amount expended on extras. The total cost per head per month is also noted.

F-3070. Can you give us a statement showing the total percentage of sick over a series of years?—After giving a return under the heading of "diseases" I also show the percentage of total sick each year. Here is an instance of one garden where the sickness has been very heavy owing to an epidemic of kala-azar. Sickness on that garden, therefore, is higher than it is on a number of other gardens where they do not have that epidemic.

F-3071. Do the figures over recent years show a marked reduction in sickness?—One particular garden shows a reduction from 4·1 to 1·5. Another garden shows a reduction of 2·3 in 1922 to 1·6 this year.

F-3072. In some of your figures you show a very marked reduction in malarial rates. Can you indicate how that reduction was effected? Have you done anything in connection with anti-malarial work?—No regular anti-malarial work has been done on the gardens. The only work I have done is regular line sanitation squad work. A certain number of coolies are allowed for that. They are regularly employed in cleaning out and opening out the drains which run through the lines. At the same time there is a regular removal of general refuse and manure. Having carried that work out consistently for many years, we are now getting the benefit of it. It might be put down under the heading of "Anti-malarial work". Over and above that the condition of the houses has improved during the last few years.

F-3073. You have also changed the sites of houses in different places, have you not?—On one garden, which is an out-garden of the main factory, the total number of admissions in 1923 and 1924 amounted to 1,538 and 1,178, and this year it amounted only to 751. I consider that the health of this particular garden has improved considerably, because the lines originally occupied were all low-lying and close to the Government road. The water-supply was certainly quite good because it was supplied by means of a Norton tube. At the same time the regular hookworm distributions were made and no families were transferred to the new site until they had been properly treated for hookworm infection. The new site is much higher and the surroundings much healthier. But in spite of having that healthier area it is very difficult to get a certain number of the older coolies to vacate their present houses and go to live in the new lines. I think that is due to the fact that they have a certain amount of rice land or some other attraction very near to their present houses and which appeal to them more than their health does.

F-3074. Would you say that part of this reduction in the sickness rates was caused by an improvement in pay?—Pay has increased during the last few years, and must have made a difference.

F-3075. Your gardens are not very badly infected with malaria, are they?—Our returns show up remarkably well as regards actual malaria, and also as regards the splenic index. On one garden the splenic rate record in 1922 was only 5·9. In 1928 it was reduced to 2·2, and that has continued during the last four years. That compares very favourably with gardens which are situated towards the hills.

F-3076. What are the spleen rates in those other gardens?—I know of one spleen rate of as much as 60 to 70 per cent. It varies from that figure down to 10 and 15. The general sickness return was increased at least 25 per cent. on one side of the river as compared with the side of the river on which I am now working.

F-3077. *The Chairman*: That 25 per cent. increase being due to malaria?—Yes, I blame malaria.

F-3078. *Colonel Russell*: How do you consider that the water-supply should be controlled on the ordinary estate?—On one garden on which I am working there are tanks. On another garden there are ordinary wells which are dug to the depth of 40 or 50 feet. Personally I think that every single well should be

properly controlled, protected and provided with a reliable pump. I do not say that a cistern is absolutely necessary, but the well itself should be protected against the bucketing out of the water.

F-3079. The dysentery rates on tea gardens would indicate the quantity of water-supply available?—I had an experience this last year of an outbreak of dysentery on a garden, and the first thing I thought about was the water-supply, but I came to the conclusion that the water-supply was not to blame.

F-3080. What do you think is to blame?—The only evil which came to my mind was the fly question, and one of the difficulties that I had to contend with was keeping the hospital latrine in the order that it should be kept because I could not get reliable sweepers to do the work, and the fly question was certainly a noticeable nuisance on the garden where the diarrhoea and dysentery complaints were prevalent last year.

F-3081. Do you have any preference for tube wells?—Tube wells without doubt, if one can get them put in, are very much reliable and efficient, and there is no danger of contamination. As a matter of fact we are having tube wells put in. One was put in last year and another is going to be put in now.

F-3082. You have not had long experience of tube wells then?—No.

F-3083. With regard to latrines, are there any latrines on the estates under your control?—They are only in the hospitals; all the hospitals are supplied with latrines and they have been in use on the gardens for quite a number of years. But I have not pushed the question as regards getting them put into the lines simply because I realize the difficulty there is in keeping the hospital latrines in good order inspite of one's own personal supervision, because I do not think the garden doctor would take any interest in the supervision and cleanliness of the hospital latrines unless the medical officer makes it a point of supervising them personally. If left to them it would not be properly supervised.

F-3084. Supposing your latrines are of the septic tank type, do you not think you would get better results from them?—My hospital latrines are of the septic type plan entirely; they are not ordinary latrines. I call them *aqua* septic latrines.

F-3085. *Colonel Russell*: Do you think that if latrines were generally provided, the coolies on the estates would use them?—Personally I do not think they would.

F-3086. Is it not a matter for education?—It will take a very long time. They have been tried on the gardens but they did not prove a success.

F-3087. *The Chairman*: Do I take it that your opinion is that a badly kept latrine is more dangerous than the use of the jungle?—That sums it up entirely. It is very difficult to keep the type of latrines that we can put in in the ordinary way in the condition that it ought to be kept.

F-3088. *Colonel Russell*: But does the general use of the jungle not tend to keep the rate of hookworm infection up?—Personally I control all my hookworm infections. By the system that we have adopted all persons get treatment by rotation. This system has been carried on so regularly in former years that last year and this year I am only treating very few people for hookworm who I consider are infected.

F-3089. What proportion of the total will that be?—It is not more than 20 per cent, who are getting treatments this cold weather. But, on the other hand, the regular treatment will go on all through the year. If a coolie comes to the hospital for any complaint he gets the hookworm treatment first no matter what his disease or complaint is.

F-3090. *The Chairman*: You treat your whole population with what you consider a prophylactic treatment?—That is done during the annual muster when all the houses are inspected; they come up from different houses and every day so many are treated.

F-3091. *Colonel Russell*: Under the present rules, you cannot label a garden as unhealthy until the death rate is 70 per thousand. Do you not consider that figure is much too high?—Personally I think it is too high compared with the health of some of the gardens under my supervision.

F-3092. What figure would you give as a reasonable basis for judging whether a garden was unhealthy or healthy?—You might bring it down to 5 per cent. But on the other hand should an outbreak of cholera occur it is very hard lines to put that garden on the black list for no fault of the management.

F-3093. But that would be an exceptional circumstance. In our present inspections of this area we seldom found the death rate to be more than 35 per thousand. Why have they maintained, by regulation, a figure of 7 per cent?—I suppose there was some special reason for giving that number originally.

F-3094. Does that reason exist now?—Personally I think the health returns of all gardens throughout the province show a tremendous improvement.

F-3095. You think this figure is too high?—It should be reduced according to the present day ideas.

F-3096. You have mentioned the use of *dais* on estates. Do you think it possible to engage or utilize women trained as health visitors for doing general welfare work among women and children?—Personally I think a woman is the only person to take charge of that work. The doctor's time is spent in the ordinary routine hospital work. Where the in-patients are very high, the garden doctor has not got time to attend to the child welfare work which is becoming very heavy on the gardens. Another point is this: The best hospital work is done during the mornings. In the old days the garden doctors went out to work very much earlier than they do now, and they had time for it. But now the majority of the work has to be put in within a limited number of hours and as such the garden doctors have not got time to check the children's feeding and to see that the child welfare work is properly done; it is handed over to the compounder to see that these children are treated and looked after properly.

F-3097. So that it would be better to have women health visitors?—There is plenty of work for a person of that type on each main factory, because she can take over all the child welfare work.

F-3098. *The Chairman*: Is there a supply of such women in the province?—It has been tried on a garden in this district, but I have forgotten what the trouble was. I do not know whether she is still employed. She lived in the main factory and went out and attended at the different gardens; but then there was the difficulty of transport.

F-3099. *Colonel Russell*: From the same point of view, do you consider that it would be advisable to employ a certain number of women medical officers on groups of gardens for looking after children?—Provided you get the right class of person that will be listened to by the coolie. It is very difficult even to get the garden women to support the *dais*; they have to do that over and above the ordinary *dais* that are employed on themselves.

F-3100. But there would be no real difficulty in having women medical officers?—No.

F-3101. I take it that you and the other medical officers on groups of estates spend most of your time doing what might be called "general practitioner's work," that is to say looking after sick persons and that you do not have very much time to spend on what might be called under the term preventive work?—Owing to the number of visits we have to do we only have time simply to go round and see the special cases in the hospital.

F-3102. So that the general question of preventive medicine is more or less pushed to the side because of the urgent demands of sick individuals?—The only preventive medicine is brought under one's notice at the end of the year when the inspection is done and recommendations are sent in with the annual returns.

F-3103. My point is that it would be far better to appoint a special public health medical officer for doing this general preventive work. Would you agree to that?—Certainly; the more time one is able to give to that special branch the more efficient the work must be.

F-3104. So that if you had one or more medical officers trained particularly in branches of public health work, you would eventually have less practitioner's work to do?—Provided their recommendations may be carried out.

F-3105. You would also agree, I think, that there is a considerable difference in the standard of health on different gardens even in the same group?—On the gardens which I am referring to in these returns, I think the same standard holds good on each garden.

F-3106. Let me put it this way: We have seen in our inspections great variations in the standard of health on different gardens. Have you got any suggestions to make to us as to the way in which the less healthy garden might be raised to the standard of the healthy garden?—It will come under the heading of public health work.

F-3107. Would you be in favour of a Board of Health?—Provided they had control over all the gardens in a certain area. They should not be able to control the health on one garden while they have no control over its neighbouring garden, because that would interfere with the labour; the labour would feel that they are getting a lot of worry on this garden which they do not get on the other.

F-3108. But that would be the very point on which a public health board would be useful in raising the standard of the backward gardens to that of the others?—The same work which is done on one garden should be enforced on all the gardens in that area.

F-3109. I quite agree with you. It will be necessary in order to do that to have a public health Act for the province?—Yes.

F-3110. *The Chairman*: All that will be necessary is to have an agreement between the proprietors of the companies themselves to establish and maintain a general board whose duty it would be to raise the level over the whole industry?—Would all the concerns in that district be represented on that board?

F-3111. At present presumably it could only cover the 93 per cent. which are covered by the Indian Tea Association. The force of law would be required to bring in the 7 per cent. who are not at present included?—My only point is that it is not workable to have rules and regulations on one garden which are not enforced on its neighbouring garden; otherwise there is bound to be jealousy and feeling amongst the labour force themselves.

F-3112. *Colonel Russell*: I want to go back to the question of the central hospital. You are responsible at least to two different managing agents. Do you think there would be any difficulty in such circumstances in having a central hospital to be used by the coolie population on estates owned by different companies?—If it could be started by any one company, I am sure the neighbouring companies would also join in and support it provided the central hospital is not situated at very great distance from their gardens. For instance, take the group of gardens to which I am responsible. Instead of running 2 or 3 main hospitals and 4 or 5 small hospitals I would have one central hospital which would be visited daily and the other main factories would only be visited once a week or once a fortnight as necessary; they would come under the heading of dispensary type.

F-3113. *Miss Power*: In the case of coolies that come from a tea district to a tea estate, supposing an epidemic occurs and the parents die, is there any responsibility on the part of the management for repatriating the orphans?—Personally I think the coolies live there so long they have their own relations; they would much prefer to live with their own relations rather than to be repatriated to their own country.

F-3114. *Colonel Russell*: But supposing they had no relations?—They will go to their own caste men.

F-3115. You would leave the responsibility to members of their own caste?—Personally I would, because if you interfere, unless you are asked to, there will surely be trouble. Even if there is a condition that they should be repatriated, I do not think they would go.

F-3116. Will that apply in the case of young children too?—Yes; they would be better looked after here than they would be in their own country.

F-3117. *Miss Power*: Do the managers accept any responsibility for pressing the relatives of any orphan children left on the estate to take in, or do they prefer to bring them as potential workers on their own estate?—I do not think they have any responsibility.

F-3118. *Colonel Russell*: They do not recognize any obligation to press the relatives of orphan children?—I do not think so.

F-3119. *Mr. Cliff*: There have been certain returns handed in. They deal, as I understand, sometimes with one garden and sometimes with more than one. Do we get the population of the particular garden with which they deal in those returns?

Colonel Russell: Yes; the number of men, women and children is given.

F-3120. *Mr. Cliff*: Will you tell us the cost per head that is involved in this medical treatment?

Colonel Russell: The figures for six years are given there.

Mr. Cliff: For the whole of the population?

Colonel Russell: For one garden.

F-3121. *Mr. Cliff*: Do the children on the gardens over which you have control obtain much milk?—Most of the coolies themselves keep cows, but the milk question is always very difficult unless it is taken over by the managers themselves to provide good milk from a well bred cow.

F-3122: *Colonel Russell*: You mean the coolies prefer to sell the milk than to use it?—Personally I think they use it; there is not enough to sell. It is very difficult to buy milk very often on the garden for the hospital. In fact, a big supply of tinned milk has to be kept by me in the godown to supply for hospital work, and I do not rely on the milk that I get from the lines.

F-3123. *Mr. Cliff*: Have you got any control over the housing on the estate—the type and the state of repair?—We make our recommendations when houses should be repaired, but they are done in the ordinary routine annual repairs.

F-3123a. *Colonel Russell*: What about the type?—One's opinion is asked as regards whether one thinks the tin houses are healthier than the old thatched houses. Personally I like the old thatch but then on the other hand when thatch is not available one has to give way and have the tin houses erected. But the coolies themselves, I think, are getting to like the tin houses because they do not require so much repair work and at the same time they do not get damaged in a storm or a gale when there is heavy rain. They are getting to like the present type of houses very much more than they did a few years ago.

F-3124. *Mr. Cliff*: Would it be possible to let the Commission know what type of houses you have recommended on your own estate?—Personally I have not recommended any special type. I have been only asked whether I approve of this or that. The type I have asked for is to have a verandah accommodation on the fronts of their houses, but then comes the expense of the extra tins; in some of the houses the fittings do not permit any extra space for such a verandah, while in some they do.

F-3125. Would you welcome co-operation between the garden doctors and the public board of health?—Certainly, because if a good deal of our work is to be carried out under the heading preventive work, our recommendations would be listened to more readily if they were supported.

F-3126. With regard to the sick allowance to which you referred, does the return show the cost per head of the population of the sick allowance granted?

Colonel Russell: No, it does not.

F-3127. Would it be possible to show the cost of the sickness allowance that you spend each year on your estates for the years which you have given the returns?—Could you get those figures?—No. I have given in the returns only the actual cost of the in-patient feeding.

F-3128. *Mr. Cliff*: When you discharge a patient from the hospital is he ready to go back for work at once?—If he is unable to go to regular work he is recommended by the medical officer to be given some type of work that he can easily do to allow him to draw full pay directly after he leaves the hospital.

F-3129. Does that mean, in point of fact, there is no sickness allowance?—Sickness allowance is given to an in-patient's relations for the period they attend on him in the hospital.

F-3130. *Colonel Russell*: Take the case of a man who had an attack of pneumonia. You keep him in hospital for three or four weeks and then you discharge him. He probably requires a certain period for convalescence. Is there any sickness allowance given to him during that period of convalescence?—No. If he is unable to go to regular work he is allowed to rest in his own house for a certain period, and if he is able to work he is given suitable work as soon as possible.

F-3131. During the period that he takes rest in his house does he get any sickness allowance?—Not that I know of.

F-3132. *Mr. Cliff*: Generally speaking, has the physique and general health conditions of the population on the gardens improved during the last ten years?—Certainly; there is a remarkable improvement. The class of cases that we see on admission now compared with the general condition on admission a few years ago has improved without a doubt.

F-3133. Does that mean that the worker's diet is a satisfactory diet?—I should say it is ample. Any amount of pay can be earned if they only take

the trouble to do it, but they do not; they spend most of their time attending to their own work which may be from their point of view more profitable than doing the garden work.

F-3134. *Colonel Russell*: Do they get all the vitamins necessary?—I think so.

F-3134a. *Dijran Chaman Lall*: Is there any provision made for coolies who become old and are incapacitated from doing any work?—There is a special fund on the garden where I have been working, and such persons go on that special pension fund list.

F-3135. What is the amount of the pension that they draw?—I really do not know.

F-3136. Could you send those figures?—Certainly.

F-3137. Do I understand that you are in favour of a Board of Health being instituted which would have legal powers to enforce on the estates measures in regard to health and sanitation?—Personally I am.

F-3138. If there is a case of serious rheumatism of the type that I saw on an estate here where the man was unfit for work, is there any method by which such an individual can be repatriated?—I personally think that that comes under the heading "unfit for garden work"; he can be recommended and he would be sent back to his own country without any trouble at all. I remember a case of a labourer who was asked to be repatriated because he had no relations on the garden and he was unfit even for ordinary garden work.

F-3139. Is that done by the gardens for which you are responsible?—Yes.

F-3140. With regard to hookworm, do you think that if the coolies wore boots and shoes it would decrease the incidence?—I tried shoes on my garden a number of years ago, but half the time they would not wear them. They were provided free to start with, but they would not regularly use them.

F-3141. If they were to use them, would it not decrease the incidence?—It certainly would, but that is only one way; there are plenty of other ways of controlling that without the introduction of shoes.

(The witness withdrew.)

Rev. D. J. TIRTHI of Deogharia.

F-3142. *The Chairman*: We understand that you have had many years experience of life in Assam. For how many years have you been working here?—I came here in 1894.

F-3143. Does your work take you amongst the tea garden workers to any great extent?—Yes, I am working among the tea garden coolies.

F-3144. From your long experience can you say whether you have noticed an improvement in the condition of the tea garden workers over recent years?—Yes. When I came here I found that the incidence of infantile mortality was very high chiefly due to the absence of trained women doctors to attend to maternity cases. I reported this matter to the proper authorities and since the last seven years we are having a European nurse; we are also having a lady doctor from last year.

F-3145. So that in your view there has been a great improvement in recent times?—Yes. Many native *dais* are sent to Chabwar for training in midwifery.

F-3146. *Colonel Garbett*: Are you referring to the people living in the villages or to those living in the gardens?—To both.

F-3147. *The Chairman*: From your knowledge of the people now on the tea gardens, do you find them reasonably happy in their circumstances, or do you meet any who would wish themselves back in their own country?—The people do not want to go back to their country because it is very difficult to get land there; they prefer to remain here in Assam because they can get some land for cultivation.

F-3148. Can you tell the Commission anything about the schools for the tea garden workers, if there is a desire for education, and if you can suggest anything that, in your view, ought to be done for education?—When I went to Chabwar I opened a school in the lines there; I was also living in the lines

and I was teaching the students both in the mornings and in the evenings. Of those whom I taught, one has become a qualified compounder, and 4 or 5 are holding the position of *zamadars* and *moharars* and *chowkidars* and *sardars*.

F-3149. You said that you started this school. Did you obtain help from the garden manager?—No; I got help from the mission and I was paid by the mission; I was a catechist.

F-3150. Was there no contribution from the garden?—No.

F-3151. How many children came to your school?—There were 20 to 25.

F-3152. Is that school working now?—No, it had to be stopped, because the mission was unable to pay the schoolmaster.

F-3153. We can quite understand that. But if the schools were provided in larger numbers on the tea gardens, in your view, would the children be ready to go there?—They ought to go anyhow; whether they will go or not I cannot say.

F-3154. You said that in some cases where rice was provided or sold by garden managers, it was not of good quality. Do you wish to say anything about that?—Yes, that is true. The managers keep the rice in the godowns for a long time and it is also very unclean. When the rice is cleaned 4 seers come to 3 seers only. There is no nutrition whatever in the rice so sold.

F-3155. Of course in the old days it was one of the conditions of service that rice should be sold at a fixed price to the coolies, but that has been abolished now. Do the coolies prefer to buy their rice in the bazaar?—In many places they are doing it. Some people cultivate their own rice. Those who do like that get good rice. But the rest who buy from the garden itself do not get good rice. When that rice is cooked it gives a bad smell.

F-3156. Is it the case that the managers have to keep the rice for a long time in their godowns?—No, they buy bad rice from the *banias*. The *banias* take high prices and give only bad rice.

F-3157. The manager is deceived in the bazaar just like some of us in shopping?—Yes.

F-3158. With regard to the amount of Rs. 12 that the garden worker receives at the end of 12 months' service, do the recruits think that there is something binding on them to work for another year on that garden?—Are they not aware that Act XIII has been abolished?—No, they do not know.

F-3159. As a preacher coming into close contact with these garden workers do you tell them that these restrictions have been removed?—No, I have not told them that.

F-3160. Still you are convinced that they are under that impression, a wrong impression?—That is not a wrong impression. Those who are living within the garden consider themselves bound to work for another 12 months for the advance they have received. They think that it is not proper for them to take the money and stay away from work.

F-3161. Would you be in favour yourself of giving every garden worker the right to go back to his own country at the expense of the garden when he has been here three years if he finds himself unhappy?—If they get the money to cover their travelling expenses they can go home. But many people want to settle in the *husti* near the jungle, because they have no lands in their own country.

F-3162. Do the children begin to work on the gardens when they are too young?—Children between the ages of 7 and 9 gather insects. They only do light work.

F-3163. May I take it that unless they were at school they are as well occupied as they could be?—Yes, that is so, but I would prefer to see them at school.

F-3164. In your experience during the last 5 or 6 years have you come across any case of ill-treatment of garden workers either by the *sardars* or by other garden staff. I mean by ill-treatment serious beating or anything of that kind?—Recently I have not heard anything about that.

F-3165. Although you have been moving about amongst the people and would naturally hear if there was any serious complaint in that direction, you have not heard of any cases of that kind?—No, I have not heard.

F-3166. Do you think that taking the wages they earn along with other conditions of their life such as rice land, medical attention and so on, the tea garden workers are better off or as well off as the people round about in the villages?—The people in the *busti* who have got lands to cultivate are better off. The garden workers who earn 8 annas a day or who have got some rice lands are also better off. But those who have no rice lands or who are not able to earn 8 annas a day, how can they be happy?

F-3167. In your experience is there any grievance among the tea garden workers that you wish to bring to the notice of the Commission?—I should like to see a school in each garden.

F-3168. *Mr. Clow*: Do the coolies come to you to write letters for them?—No, they do not come to me, but there are many Christians who can read and write Hindustani and they go to them.

F-3169. *Mr. Cliff*: Do you often visit the gardens?—I am not able to visit the gardens often. I have to visit the gardens and the *bustis*; I have to work as a schoolmaster, as a preacher, catechist, and sometimes as a pastor.

F-3170. Do the people in the lines often tell you about their troubles and their joys?—Yes, they tell me sometimes. If they quarrel among themselves or if they fall sick they will tell me.

F-3171. Do the children like the school when they go to school?—The real difficulty is that of finding money and opening schools.

F-3172. Are the people working on the gardens lazy?—Some are lazy and are bad workers; some are good workers. Some are weak and some strong.

F-3173. *Rev. Saikia*: Are not the houses of the garden workers too hot in summer and too cold in winter?—Are they fit for sick people to live in?—Yes, they are too hot in summer and too cold in winter unless they are thatched.

F-3174. Do the coolies like to live in separate houses with a small plot round each house for growing vegetables or do they like to live in the lines?—They prefer separate houses with vegetable plots.

(The witness withdrew. The Commission adjourned to Shillong.)

ASSAM.

Fifty-fifth Meeting.

SHILLONG.

Thursday, 16th January 1930.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (Chairman).

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| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | DIWAN CHAMAN LALL, M.L.A. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. | L.T.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S., <i>Medical Assessor.</i> |
| MR. JOHN CLIFF. | |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA. | |
| LT.-COL. H. C. GARRETT, SUPERINTENDENT, KANJKOAH BUDLI BETA TEA CO., LTD. | .. } <i>Assistant Commissioners.</i> |
| MRS. ATTAUR RAHMAN .. | .. } <i>Lady Assesor.</i> |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. .. | .. } <i>Joint Secretaries.</i> |
| MR. A. DIBBIN .. | .. } |

Mr. A. J. LAINE, C.I.E., I.C.S., Officer on special duty with the Government of Assam, and Lt.-Col. T. D. MURISON, I.M.S., Director of Public Health, Assam.

F-3175. *The Chairman:* Mr. Lainé, I understand you appear in support of the memorandum submitted to us by the Government of Assam?—(Mr. Laine) Yes.

F-3176. What is the length and nature of your experience in matters relating to the tea gardens of Assam?—I first came to Assam in 1904; I was stationed for a short time at Sylhet as an Assistant Magistrate. Then I was posted to Karimganj as Subdivisional Officer. I did not return to the Surma Valley till last year, when I officiated as Commissioner for eight months. In the other Valley I have held charge of the Golaghat subdivision in the Sibsagar district, and I have held charge of the Darrang or Tezpur district, and also of the Gauhati and Goalpara districts, though in the last two districts there are very few gardens. In the year before last I officiated as Commissioner of the Assam Valley for a period of four and a half months. That is the extent of my connection with the tea districts.

F-3177. You have a fairly wide experience both in the districts and in the centre?—Yes, I have had some experience of both.

F-3178. In our investigations so far we have been a little puzzled to understand how much control and how much power of action resides in the Government of Assam over the conditions in the tea gardens, and we gather that that control does not extend very far: the gardens are inspected occasionally at certain periods, certain reports are made to Government on those inspections, but the power to bring the less progressive gardens up to the higher standard reached by many of them would appear to us to be limited to the single power of stopping recruiting on behalf of a garden. Does that coincide with your view?—I think that is correct.

F-3179. You have no powers at present to call for improvement in respect of matters of health, sanitation, education or the general welfare of the garden workers?—Yes, that is the present position; we have no legal power. Of course, Government are in a position to exercise a certain amount of indirect influence and pressure, but have no legal power to implement their recommendations.

F-3180. The legal power is confined to stopping recruiting?—Practically so, yes.

F-3181. If a garden is defaulting in the ordinary amenities that should be provided for the garden workers, that is the sole remedy that you have?—Yes, practically; I mean if the garden declines to carry out a recommendation, then Government is practically powerless except to the extent mentioned.

F-3182. And supposing that garden did not depend on recruiting through *sardars*, then there is no power at all?—So far as I am aware, there is no legal power.

F-3183. The Assam Labour Board is only concerned with the recruiting side of the question?—Yes.

F-3184. It has nothing to do with conditions on the garden?—No.

F-3185. Would your Government be favourable to the establishment of some machinery that would give you greater powers in that direction?—It is rather a difficult question to answer; Government has hitherto been strongly in favour of the removal of such restrictions on recruiting as do exist. As to the conditions on the tea gardens, the present system has in the past worked on the whole fairly satisfactorily; District Officers and Subdivisional Officers do inspect tea gardens periodically; and where necessary a medical officer is called in and sent to hold a special enquiry. In actual practice, though the legal power is not there, we have found we are in a position to influence tea gardens to introduce improvements when they have been urgently required. In the absence of any proof that the present arrangements have really hopelessly broken down, I think Government would probably give the matter further consideration before definitely committing themselves to legislation empowering them to interfere on the lines you have suggested.

F-3186. You tell us that tea cultivation is your largest and most important industry?—That is so.

F-3187. And yet you have no legal powers to level up to the standard of the best in the tea gardens?—No; the position with regard to the tea gardens is precisely the same as it is outside, so far as the power of legal interference for the introduction of improved conditions is concerned.

F-3188. We have had a suggestion that if there were in Assam a Board of Health and Welfare empowered to visit the tea gardens and to make recommendations to Government, Government being given power to take action on such recommendations as they approved, it might be a considerable help in raising the standard of life in the gardens. In your own memorandum you stress the point that what is needed is the education of the labour force to an appreciation of a higher standard of living when they would want more and be prepared to work for it, making good use of their earnings. We ourselves have observed considerable variation in the gardens in their attempts towards that goal and that there is no co-ordinated effort over the gardens as a whole. You would prefer not to express an opinion on the suggestion?—I think Government would prefer to have the scheme developed a little more and worked out in detail before expressing a definite opinion, in view of the fact that under the present system and under existing conditions, things run fairly smoothly and considerable progress has been made during the last decade or so.

F-3189. No doubt you are aware that, speaking generally, the gardens could do with a much stronger labour force than they have at present?—I believe that is so.

F-3190. They could both improve the cultivation of their gardens and in many cases extend the cultivation, and by that means add to the prosperity of your province?—Yes.

F-3191. In our investigations in the recruiting areas we have found that there still lingers some prejudice against work on the gardens in Assam, no doubt some of it due to memories of days which we hope have long passed away. We have had a suggestion that if every recruited garden worker were given a guarantee of repatriation at the expense of the garden not later than the end of three years, that might remove once for all this old prejudice due to the distance to travel, climate and so on, and very substantially improve the flow of recruits. Would your Government be in favour of a general condition of that kind giving the right of repatriation to any who desired to go back to their country at the end of a reasonable period like three years?—Yes, I feel sure that the Government of Assam would be in favour of a condition of that kind.

F-3192. And do you think that the establishment of that right would automatically help in increasing the efforts of the tea planters to make conditions so good that the great majority of their workers would elect to stay and not to go back to their country at the end of such a period?—It might certainly have that effect on them.

F-3193. And also do you think that it might save a good deal of expense in the repatriation, even after a few weeks or months, of quite unsuitable workers who are under the present system occasionally sent up to the gardens?—On that point it is a little difficult to express an opinion, because the cost of repatriation at the end of three years on a possibly substantial scale would have to be calculated, and compared with the expenditure now incurred on occasional repatriations, etc.

F-3194. I mean that if the flow of would-be recruits to the depots in the recruiting areas was very substantially increased, then more care would be taken at the depots in selection and rejection of unsuitable cases, so that it might be hoped that there would be a much more suitable quality of recruits sent up to the gardens?—Yes, I am sure the Government of Assam would share that view.

F-3195. The cancellation of Act XIII was intended to give to the garden worker complete freedom; we have found that although the contract has been abolished, in some cases there are what are called civil agreements which have taken its place; in other cases the payment of what is called the bonus of Rs. 10 or Rs. 12 at the end of a year, and a receipt in the form of a thumb print taken for it, still leaves in the mind of the worker an idea that he is under some obligation for the following 12 months. Has that come to your notice?—I do not think it has particularly. It may be that in the early days after the withdrawal of Act XIII it took some time for that knowledge to filter through, but I think on the whole now the garden labour are well aware of the fact that they are free to walk out of the garden if they want to. If they do put their thumb impressions on receiving an advance, I think it is simply as a receipt and as a recognition that they feel themselves more or less honour bound to continue for some time longer, in the same way as if I gave an advance to my own private servant, I would do it on the assumption and expectation, and he would receive the money also on the assumption and expectation, that he would continue in my service for a short time longer, but he would know perfectly well that he is not bound to remain if he really wants to go.

F-3196. Then you think there is really no reason for this lingering idea amongst them that there is something that binds them if they accept this bonus. We found the curious fact that a certain number of the garden workers do not ask for or take this Rs. 12 bonus?—I presume the garden manager exercises some discretion as to the coolies to whom he is prepared to give advances, and that in some cases, it may be, coolies do not come forward because the management may not be disposed to give them the advance. In other cases they may actually intend to leave the estate in the near future and therefore think it wiser to receive no advance from the garden.

F-3197. With regard to education of the children on the tea gardens in your memorandum you express considerable disappointment with the present state of affairs. How far do your Government use any pressure or give any encouragement to the establishment and maintenance of schools on the tea gardens?—The schools that would be established and have been established on tea gardens so far are mainly lower primary schools. Under the Assam Local Self-Government Act the lower primary education is the particular charge of the Local Boards of Assam. As a general rule Government gives Local Boards liberal grants-in-aid towards the development of primary and other education, but it does not like to interfere unduly with their discretion. Comparatively recently a Compulsory Primary Education Act has been enacted under which Local Boards are now given the statutory power of introducing compulsory primary education in certain areas under certain conditions. The Act has not hitherto had much effect because it was only recently passed, but I think one or two Boards have already come forward with schemes for the introduction of compulsory education in selected areas, and there is nothing to prevent their coming forward now and asking for the introduction of primary education in any area, which may or may not include tea gardens.

F-3198. What kind of support does your Government give to the Local Boards which are ready to take that action?—Two-thirds of the cost will eventually come from the Provincial revenues. The Act contemplates, I believe, that a plebiscite of some kind will be held in the locality. I can get you a copy of the Act.

F-3199. Does that involve the imposition of a rate or tax?—Yes, it involves the imposition of a small rate.

F-3200. Do you anticipate many favourable plebiscites?—That we do not yet know, but we may get them because only one-third of the cost will come from local funds and local taxation.

F-3201. But even so, the local ratepayer in India must be different from the ratepayer we know elsewhere, if you get any great enthusiasm for it?—Yes, but I think the Act has further provisions with which I am not acquainted allowing Government to impose its will under certain conditions.

F-3202. Has your Government ever considered a special kind of education particularly suitable to children on the tea gardens, adapted to their future life rather than the stereotyped kind of primary education?—After 1908 three types of schools were tried in tea gardens, but I think they were all more or less of the normal lower primary type in vogue outside tea gardens; I do not think they were specially designed to meet the educational needs of tea garden coolies as a class. Some of those schools are under the direct control of the manager, and, of course, if he thought fit to have a school run on particular lines to suit the needs of his labour force, there is nothing to prevent it.

F-3203. Supposing the tea industry itself were to devise a type of education particularly suitable to the conditions and life of the tea gardens, always, of course, subject to final approval by the Central Government, would your Government encourage a movement of that kind?—I am perfectly sure they would.

F-3204. Do you not think that a Board of Health and Welfare would assist the individual managers to pool their experience and arrive at a system which might go on by progressive stages?—Yes, I quite agree; if a Board of that kind were constituted it would be very useful in this direction.

F-3205. At the end of your memorandum you supply us with the correspondence that has taken place between your Government, the Government of India and the Indian Tea Association with regard to the amendment of Act VI or the enactment of a new and more simple Act to take its place. Is there anything further, since the date of these letters, which you would wish to put before the Commission?—No, I am not aware of any development since the last letter was written.

F-3206. Then I take it, to summarize what you say in this correspondence, that from the point of view of Assam you wish to see restrictions reduced to a minimum?—That is so.

F-3207. You are anxious to see a system of accredited agents empowered to recruit alongside the existing *sardari* system?—That is so.

F-3208. And from the point of view of getting desirable migrants to Assam, you think that would be a great help?—Yes.

F-3209. In examining the figures of vital statistics on a number of gardens we have found what seems to us to be a flaw which takes away most of the value from the statistics which you collect and which have been presented to us. With regard to the method of registration of still-births, on one garden you find that a still-birth is not counted either as a birth or a death but is entered in a separate register; in some cases you find that the birth is registered and not the death; in some cases it is registered both as a birth and a death. How can you have any valuable statistics if your Government does not issue definite instructions on a point of that kind?—That is a point which I think has not previously been brought to the notice of Government. I quite appreciate the point of your criticism and I can assure you that Government will look into the matter. I do not think there are instructions on that point; if there have been no instructions, they will be issued at once to set that right.

F-3210. I take it that Colonel Murison would agree that the matter of still-births as an entirely separate matter is one of the best indications as to the general health of any population?—(Col. Murison) It is a very important matter and I think the still-births should be registered separately and not counted either as births or deaths, so that we may know something about them.

F-3211. They would not then affect the figures of infantile mortality?—Exactly.

F-3212. I think that is the custom in other countries?—Yes, I think so.

F-3213. *Sir Alexander Murray*: The Manager of the Boloma Tea Garden in the Assam Valley told us he had applied to the Assam Labour Board to be permitted to recruit through an association other than the Tea Districts Labour Association, that the Assam Labour Board had recommended that he should be so permitted, but that he had received no reply from the Government of Assam. Do you know anything about that case?—(Mr. Lainé) I do not, but I will have it looked up and will communicate the facts to you later.

F-3214. Do you know any cases where the Government have refused to give licenses to recruit to any employer or association of employers?—I do not.

F-3215. The bulk of the recruiting is evidently done by the Tea Districts Labour Association?—Yes.

F-3216. We have heard it is pretty much a monopoly and have been wondering why it should be a monopoly. Has your Government attempted directly or indirectly to put monopolistic power into the hands of the Tea Districts Labour Association to the exclusion of other recruiting agencies?—No, I think the fact is that hitherto there has only been the Tea Districts Labour Association in the field, or at any rate very little else.

F-3217. There are one or two other agencies?—Yes, I believe there are.

F-3218. Perhaps you will look up your records and let us know?—I will do so.

F-3219. In reply to the Chairman you said you had no legal power to enforce any recommendations you might wish to make to gardens; have you ever made recommendations to gardens to do certain things?—Frequently.

F-3220. And have they refused to do so?—No, I cannot remember a single instance in which they have refused to do so. In some cases there has been a little delay, but speaking personally, sooner or later I have always had my recommendations carried out.

F-3221. So that really as far as the legal power is concerned, it is immaterial in your experience whether the power is legal or whether it is just an obligation accepted by the tea gardens to do what Government wants them to do?—Hitherto it has been largely immaterial, as you say; whether it will continue to be so I do not know.

F-3222. Give us from your own experience types of communications which you have made to tea gardens asking them to do particular things?—I remember in some cases having condemned the existing water-supply and strongly advised moving the lines to a site where a better supply would be available, or to dig new wells or introduce a pipe system; they have taken up the suggestion and in the course of a year or two carried it out. In other cases I have criticized the hospital accommodation provided and that has been improved. In other cases I have criticized the nature of the lines and the state of repair in which they were kept, and I have found that in every case my recommendations have been attended to.

F-3223. Have you ever attempted to interfere with wages?—On one occasion at least I had occasion to criticize the wages and the system of management generally of a particular garden. I forget whether I conveyed my criticism directly or through the local Government to the managing agents; in any case an improvement was immediately effected.

F-3224. To your knowledge there is no case where a garden has refused to do whatever as a result of your inspections you thought they ought to do?—Speaking personally, I cannot think of any case within my experience, and I do not think any case has been brought to the notice of Government.

F-3225. The Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1921-22 made certain recommendations; have you ever categorically gone into those recommendations and made enquiries as to whether the individual items have been dealt with by the tea gardens or whoever is interested?—I think the extent to which the recommendations of the 1921-22 Committee were adopted by Government was set forth in the Government Resolution which was published after the Committee submitted their report.

F-3226. In that Resolution I think Government approved of certain recommendations and disapproved of others. Since 1922 have you followed up that matter?—Yes, so far as circumstances permitted.

F-3227. *Mr. Cliff*: In the local Government's memorandum the system of advances to which the Labour Enquiry Committee took exception is mentioned; that was the system of issuing rice at concession rates on credit. Your Government say: "To what extent the Committee's recommendations have been accepted, the Government are unable to say." Since that date I do not think Government has made any particular enquiries on this particular point; I am not aware of any.

F-3228. The local Government say: "The Assam Labour Enquiry Committee in agreeing with that view pronounced against the bonus system and stated that in their opinion the first essential of Indian labour is a higher standard of living and any spare money which employers have would be better spent on education, superannuation benefits and welfare work generally. With the views then expressed the Government of Assam are in complete agreement." Have they followed up that

matter?—The Assam Labour Enquiry Committee pronounced against the bonus system, and Government accepted their views. As regards the desirability of raising the standard of living, the Government have pressed their views on the industry in successive annual resolutions.

F-3229. Has the Government followed up what is there said about education?—I think that point has been emphasized in several of the subsequent Government Resolutions on immigration, but, apart from that, I think Government consider this is a matter primarily for the employer.

F-3230. Has any further action been taken with regard to superannuation benefits?—The Government is not aware of any; I do not think any further action has been taken.

F-3231. Apparently the Government favour "welfare work generally," but in their memorandum they say: "Apart from measures for the physical welfare of the labour force.....there is but little welfare work in Assam."—That is so.

F-3232. In the Government memorandum there is the statement: "It was suggested to a medical witness that as the question of the introduction of a conservancy system on tea gardens was in a more or less experimental stage, it might be advisable for medical officers to confer together and discuss the matter, and the Committee think that action on these lines might have useful and practical results." The Government are in general agreement with the Committee's view that while latrines are not necessary or practicable for the labour population living in scattered hamlets, some conservancy system is required for congested barrack lines." Again I put the question: the Government agreeing, have the Government taken any positive action to encourage the tea estates to give effect to those recommendations?—I shall have to look up that point.

F-3233. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What other type of welfare work could you indulge in for these workers?—That is the difficulty. That is a question which requires a good deal of reflection; I am not prepared off hand to make recommendations as to what they should do. I admit that a good deal more could be done for the intellectual welfare of the workers by developing education.

F-3234. I assume you would have to make education compulsory?—Yes, within notified areas, if action is taken under the present Compulsory Education Act.

F-3235. Apart from education, you do not see anything else that could be done beyond what the employers are now doing?—I think in some cases something more could be done, perhaps in the way of providing them with playing fields and encouraging recreation by way of games, etc.

F-3236. I suppose that comes under the head of physical welfare?—Yes.

F-3237. What else?—I take it it is hardly within the province of Government to develop the spiritual welfare of the workers.

F-3238. *Colonel Russell*: What about child-welfare work?—I think on many tea gardens they do all they can for the children on the estate, but possibly they do not do it on the best lines; they help the mothers both before and after the birth and they do look after the children because they realize that the children are their potential labour force of the future.

F-3239. *Sir Alexander Murray*: As I understand it, they give maternity benefit to women before and after child-birth, they give a bonus on the birth of the child and some of them give bonuses yearly and almost until the child reaches working age?—That is so.

F-3240. In many cases they feed the children?—Yes.

F-3241. As you say, they look upon them as a valuable asset, seeing that a recruit costs anything up to Rs. 200?—Yes.

F-3242. Can you tell me any other industry in any part of India where more has been done for child-welfare?—No, I cannot.

F-3243. In the Government memorandum it is said: "Most of the children of school-going age supplement the family earnings, and the loss of this additional income, necessitating perhaps a little more work on their part, condemns the scheme in the eyes of a large majority." What is the compulsory school age in Assam?—I do not remember; I shall have to look up the age proposed under the Compulsory Education Act, of which I have promised to give you a copy.

F-3244. In other provinces we have been told that from 7 to 11 is the compulsory age. Do you suggest that the earnings of children between 7 and 11 are so material that they prevent children attending school if there are schools for them?—In many cases some of the younger children do begin to earn something. If they

do not earn anything, they look after the cattle of the family at a very tender age.

F-3245. We have been told in most gardens that men to look after the cattle are supplied where there are cattle?—I think that is the case in many gardens but I do not think it is the case throughout.

F-3246. In the Government memorandum it is said that the cost of importation of labour is excessive, "but the industry must be left to solve that problem for itself." Does not the whole problem that we are enquiring into resolve itself into the cost of recruitment? What do you mean when you say the industry must be left to solve that problem for itself?—I do not think Government can step in and prescribe what bonus a tea garden should pay to its garden *surdar*, for instance, for recruiting a coolie. That is a matter entirely for the tea industry to adjust themselves.

F-3247. Would any form of recruiting, whether in the form of employment agencies or other outside agencies, entirely eliminate the question of a bonus or commission being paid to the man who brings in most coolies to a garden?—Possibly it might not, but it would certainly very much reduce it.

F-3248. *Mr. Ahmed*: Do you think your Government is in a position to pay two-thirds of any compulsory education scheme?—That is a question of funds; at the present moment the Government would not be in a position to contribute very large sums for that purpose.

F-3249. *Mr. Cliff*: Do they give two-thirds now to a garden that does its own education?—It depends on the class of school on the tea garden. The different kinds of schools are described in the Government memorandum.

F-3250. It seems to be an agreed opinion among the tea garden managers that the contribution given by Government is beggarly?—I am not in a position to say anything about that.

F-3251. *The Chairman*: Could you let us know exactly what Government does contribute, if anything, to any of the schools maintained on the tea gardens?—Yes. I will obtain the information.

F-3252. *The Chairman*: Would you also see if tea gardens have applied for a grant-in-aid and been refused?—Yes, I will have this looked up.

F-3253. *Mr. Ahmed*: Would not technical education dealing with methods of pruning, manuring and so on, be more suitable for children of tea garden workers?—It is quite possible that a certain measure of technical education would be very useful, but that is a matter for the tea industry to decide for itself; it is their labour force and their future potential labour force.

F-3254. But would not Government like to take a part in deciding what kind of education would be suitable for the benefit of the industry?—If the tea industry as a whole shows any inclination to develop education on its tea gardens on those lines, Government will do all it can to assist them.

F-3255. *The Chairman*: I think Mr. Ahmed means practical education. In addition to the information just asked for, if there have been cases of refusal of a grant to schools maintained by the tea gardens, could you give us a summary of the reasons for refusal?—I will obtain that information for you.

F-3256. *Mr. Ahmed*: What proportion do the tea garden workers and their families bear to the total population of the province?

Mr. Cliff: It is about one-seventh?

The witness: I will let you have that information.

F-3257. I understand that in Assam there are no Inspectors of Factories except the Deputy Commissioners and the Superintendents of Police; do you think that is a desirable state of things?—Hitherto we have shared at least one officer with Bengal and attempts have been made during the last 18 months to secure an officer of our own. I think one man if not two were provisionally selected, but eventually they refused appointments as Inspectors of Factories. At the present moment I think we have another man in view who is likely to accept.

F-3258. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You mean you are not offering enough money to induce them to come out?—That is possibly the reason, but I do not know.

F-3259. *Mr. Ahmed*: I suppose the Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police are not qualified as far as matters of health and sanitation are concerned?—I agree they are not technically qualified in those subjects.

F-3260. I suppose qualified men are required to do such work?—Certainly; so far as factory inspection is concerned where a certain amount of technical knowledge is more or less essential, I think a whole-time Factory Inspector is required.

F-3261. As far as your Government is concerned, there is nobody to make enquiries in the garden area regarding the health and sanitation of the workers?—That is not quite the case, because if a garden is classed as unhealthy it is inspected automatically by the Civil Surgeon who is in fact at present in charge of the public health of the district.

F-3262. Is that so in all the districts?—Yes, there is a Civil Surgeon in every district. In addition to that, even though the garden may not be classed as unhealthy, if there is anything about the garden which the Deputy Commissioner or the Subdivisional Officer feels requires to be looked into by a professional man, he requests the Civil Surgeon to make a special visit and these special visits are made from time to time.

F-3263. In view of the magnitude of this work and that the Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police and Civil Surgeons have so many other duties, would you not like to follow the example of other provinces in this respect; for instance, in Bengal we have a Health Officer in every district in addition to the Civil Surgeon, we have in industrial areas Inspector of Factories, and so forth?—The possibility of introducing Public Health Officers in districts has been recently under the consideration of Government, and a scheme was formulated under which I think five appointments were to be made in certain districts experimentally. When this came up before the Finance Committee the other day, the non-official members elected by the Council to that Committee threw out the scheme because they considered that the money which it was proposed to spend on these five District Officers of public health could be more usefully employed elsewhere on other forms of public health work; that was the considered view of the elected members of the Finance Committee.

F-3264. *Diccan Chaman Lall*: Were these Public Health Officers intended to be specially for the tea gardens?—No; they were for ordinary district work which might include tea garden work; they were to be designated District Health Officers.

F-3265. *Mr. Ahmed*: Have the Local Boards and District Boards any sanitary inspectors or medical officers to look into conditions in the rural areas?—No.

F-3266. Would your Government favour the appointment of such officers?—The finances of the Assam Government are such that it could not possibly finance a scheme of that dimension at present.

F-3267. In the tea garden areas we have been told that difficulties arise owing to the fact that the only roads are private, there being in many parts apparently no public roads. Have your Government, District Boards and Local Boards taken any steps to deal with that question?—Yes, the question of garden roads came up for consideration a short time ago in consequence of certain questions and resolutions which I think were put and moved in the Assam Council. In 1929 the local Government published a Resolution in which they summarized their views and the policy which they proposed to follow. I can let you have a copy of that Resolution.

The Chairman : Yes please.

F-3268. *Mr. Ahmed*: Have you any *chowkidars*, *panchayats* or other agencies which can supply you with accurate information as to what happens in the tea garden areas?—No. In the upper districts of Assam we have no *panchayats* or *chowkidars*; they exist only in the district of Sylhet and in the district of Goalpara under the Bengal Chowkidari Act. We have agencies in the rest of Assam which are entrusted with certain analogous duties which are laid down in the Assam Land and Revenue Manual, but their duties are not so extensive as the duties assigned to a *panchayat* or *chowkidar* under the Bengal system. These agencies are called “*gaonburas*.”

F-3269. Would your Government be in favour of setting up a union board?—If you start a *chowkidari*, *panchayat* and a union board that would involve further taxation and I am inclined to think the Assam Legislative Council would strongly oppose it. In fact, I think on occasion questions have been put, or resolutions moved, suggesting the abolition of the *chowkidari* system where it does exist.

F-3270. *Mr. Cliff*: I wish to draw your attention to what is said in the introduction to the memorandum of the Government of Assam. I think you said education of tea garden workers is a matter for the tea industry itself?—Until the tea industry itself takes some interest in it, it is very difficult for Government to take any effective measures. I think the difficulty is that Government cannot very well

take measures on behalf of tea garden labour alone; it must also take into consideration the other parts of a district; you can hardly expect Government to promote or stimulate the promotion in a certain area of an improved standard of living or education and to leave the adjacent areas untouched; the district and the province have to be treated more or less as a whole.

F-3271. Does that mean that the Government says that the tea industry has a special responsibility to the labour it imports?—As with other employers of labour, I think the educational interests of their employees should be a matter of special concern to the tea garden employers.

F-3272. Do you say it is to the interests of the tea industry to educate its labour force?—Yes. Of course, that again depends on the form of education that is imparted; if it is a useful form of education, I do not think there is any gainsaying that it must be to their interest, but you may find persons who will criticize the form of education which is being imparted in lower primary schools.

F-3273. There are leaders of the tea industry who say that education is a matter for the Government and for the whole of the province and that the industry should not be singled out; but your Government definitely says that "it is the preparation of the ground that at present demands the most attention," and that seems to me to be a correct statement of the position. Whose duty is it to prepare the ground?—I should say it is the duty of Government, of Local Bodies, of employers of labour and in fact of the whole population.

F-3274. Government are encouraging and will ultimately profit by the importation of a very mixed population; is Government taking any steps to secure co-operation between itself and the tea industry in raising the standard of life and educating the tea garden workers?—I am not aware of any special measures that have been taken to raise the standard of life.

F-3275. Would it be an unfair assumption that Government in looking forward to the next decade have no considered policy for dealing with this problem?—No, I do not think that would be exactly fair; I think the policy of Government all along has been to encourage education both for its own sake and as likely to import a stimulus towards a higher standard of life and to continue to develop primary education to the best of its ability, but it has to recognize in the case of these people who are drawn from more or less aboriginal, illiterate and credulous classes that they offer a special problem, and that the education which might be suitable for an ordinary plainsman might not be suitable for this type of person. In the same way very often the form of education which is suitable for a plainsman is not entirely suitable for a hill man who has a different mentality and has different prejudices.

F-3276. Seeing that it is a special problem, the responsibility for dealing with this problem may be said to rest on both the Government and the tea industry?—Yes, I admit that it lies on all.

F-3277. But does it not appear to you that the initiative for taking measures to deal with this problem should be with the Government?—I cannot deny that a certain responsibility does rest on Government.

F-3278. Then what has the Government done to deal with this problem?—There are quite a number of tea garden children who attend lower primary schools outside the tea gardens. We have no separate figures with regard to those. I do not know that anything very special has been done for the labour force beyond what has been done for the population of the district as a whole, and beyond what has been mentioned in the Government memorandum.

F-3279. I understand that you regard the question of wages to be a matter for the industry itself?—Very largely; it is a matter for the industry and the labourers concerned.

F-3280. With regard to recruitment has any consideration been given to the suggestion that a higher standard of wages might attract more labour and a more efficient type of labour?—If I remember rightly, I think that has come up from time to time; I believe the 1906 and the 1921-22 Committees made recommendations which were somewhat on those lines.

F-3281. Is it your opinion that a higher wage standard would result in an improved type of labour and an increased supply of labour?—I think so; an increase in wages would, I believe, be bound to attract more labour.

F-3282. In the Government memorandum it is said that there has been a steady increase in wages since the Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1921-22, but the figures with which a comparison is made are the figures of wages for 1920-21. If we take the period following upon that Committee, is the increase

in earnings as great as stated here?—As will be seen from the Annual Immigration Reports, I think there has been a small but steady annual increase in the average wage paid to garden labour since 1921-22.

F-3283. This Committee sat in 1921-22, a period which followed the disturbances, in which period there were increases of wages?—There were in a number of cases.

F-3284. But the comparison offered to us may be dealing with 1920-21, a comparison for the earlier period. The phrase "since then" means since the Committee reported. Is that correct?—If you compare the intermediate years and the average wages given in them you will find the same steady increase throughout.

F-3285. On the question of the increased earnings, are you able from your returns to say whether the increased earnings which are recorded over these two months as years go by are due to increased effort on the part of the worker or higher rates of pay?—It is impossible to tell that from the returns.

F-3286. We have been on many gardens and found a considerable proportion of good workers who are obviously under the impression that they are not free. There are certain facts which tend to make them think that they are not free. In one case people are accepting bonuses and putting a thumb print to an agreement which is identical in terms with the old agreement, with one exception and that is with the penal clauses omitted. Then some people do not apply for bonus because they believe that they are under a "girmi" as they call it. This Act has been abolished many years ago. Would it cause any trouble or difficulty to the tea industry if steps were taken to make it known clearly to every tea garden worker that he is not bound in any way by agreement and that he is absolutely free to move. I am putting on one side the question of some stamped agreements for 12 months' labour?—I am not in a position to speak on behalf of the tea industry.

Colonel Garbett: On behalf of the tea industry I should like to say that you will be running grave risks.

F-3287. I am putting that to you as a man who has had experience as a Deputy Commissioner. Among managers of gardens there is a good deal of nervousness against any movement which might help to improve the lot of these garden workers. They fear that there will be trouble. Here are a few citizens of the country who are free from a particular form of compulsion. A great number of people are not aware that they are free. In your opinion as a District Commissioner would it cause any trouble if everyone were made aware of their rights and privileges as citizens?—A great deal will depend on the way in which it is done. You are dealing with a credulous, ignorant and unsophisticated type of persons. It would be equally very easy to give them false impression in the other direction and so excite them and upset them.

F-3288. It might be necessary to excite them and upset them if they are to reach a higher standard of life. That may be bad for the industry, but I am thinking at the moment of the tea garden labourer?—I am not quite sure that I understand what you propose to tell them. In the opinion of the Government there is nothing illegal about a purely civil contract. I do not think Government would be in favour of telling a coolie that he was absolutely free even from the possibility of voluntary restraint under the terms of a civil contract.

F-3289. Take the other side. You say that the difficulty about these people is that they are credulous, easily excited and ignorant. On the other hand they are handled by men who have got all the advantages of a highly civilised state. Is not there a great responsibility upon Government and upon the people who employ them to afford them all the protection necessary?—Yes, there is a special responsibility.

F-3290. It does not appear that any steps have been taken by Government to acquaint the people of the fact that they were no longer bound by the provisions of the old Act. They have been treated, as far as one can ascertain, in exactly the same way as educated labour force is treated. Why is it that dealing with a labour force needing special treatment and special protection they are treated in the same way as educated labour force is treated?—In the matter of bringing an Act to the notice of the persons to whom it applies Government have not in any case, so far as I am aware, taken any special measures beyond the usual publication to acquaint them with their provisions. The tea garden labour force is after all very much of the same type as the

inhabitants of the neighbouring villages. There seems to be no particular reason why in the case of tea garden labourers any special measures should be taken to acquaint them with any legislative enactments or their results any more than in the case of ordinary villagers. The information of the Government, however, is that this knowledge has filtered through and reached the workers quickly.

F-3291. With regard to the people who are under a special Act the knowledge has not filtered through. If there were an educated labour force who could read the papers and take cognizance of their rights and privileges themselves there would be no complaint. But having regard to a labour force which the Government itself describes as credulous, ignorant and easily excited and therefore needing special protection, surely special steps have got to be taken in a case of that character?—Possibly, but not without great caution.

F-3292. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: How are the statistics appearing in the Immigration Labour Reports dealing with wages collected?—Returns are submitted by garden managers to the Deputy Commissioners and the Deputy Commissioners submit them to the Commissioner who compiles the divisional average. Each Commissioner submits his Immigration Report annually for his division and the provincial averages, for the purposes of the Government resolution, are compiled in the Secretariat.

F-3293. There is no check on the statement issued to you?—Speaking personally whenever I inspected a tea garden I invariably took with me the returns submitted by the tea garden for the 2 typical months of the year and checked them with reference to the garden books to satisfy myself that they had been correctly prepared and that the returns were accurate. Government have no reason to suppose that other officers do not test them in the same way.

F-3294. Take the instance of figures with regard to family earnings. How can you say from the books whether a particular woman is the wife of a particular man or not in order to have an accurate check of the family earnings?—You have always to trust the man who gathers the information on the spot.

F-3295. You take a total of the number of men, women and children employed and get the figures?—You will find it explained elsewhere in the Government memorandum as to how the family earnings are arrived at. A family is taken to consist of one man, one woman, $3/10$ of a working child, 1 non-working child and $2/10$ of an adult non-working dependent. It is admittedly an artificial method of arriving at what constitutes a normal family, but if you are to strike an average you must adopt some system of that kind.

F-3296. Would it not be possible for District Officers to check them every year?—No, the District Officer does not visit the gardens oftener than once in 2 years.

F-3297. Have you figures to show whether there has been any actual increase in the rate for *hazira* since 1922?—I could not tell you. I do not think we have any statistics on the point.

F-3298. Or with regard to the unit system?—We have had casual references from time to time as to whether the rates on a particular tea garden have increased or decreased, but we have no general figures for the province as a whole.

F-3299. If we wanted to see whether there has been an increase in the rates of wages whether under the *hazira* or the unit system the Government departments here in Shillong would not be in a position to give us the necessary figures?—No, we would not be in a position to check this from our present returns.

F-3300. In answer to the Chairman you said that things ran fairly smoothly and considerable progress had been made during the last decade and that the present state of affairs was satisfactory?—I was referring to the extent to which garden managers had adopted the recommendations of inspecting officers.

F-3301. Do you think that the present state of affairs in regard to education is satisfactory?—No.

F-3302. You had a resolution passed by the Legislative Council in 1924 recommending that the tea planters should be compelled to open up schools where there are 30 or more children under the age of 14. Why was no effect given to that resolution?—I will look up the papers and let you know.

F-3303. In your memorandum you say: "The managers with a few exceptions do not actively interest themselves in the question, more from the fear of upsetting their labour force than from any antagonism to the principle of the scheme. This policy may be short-sighted, but so long as labour is so scarce, it would be too much to expect employers to risk the loss of labour by any attempt to insist on the education of the children, and little improvement can be expected until the supply of labour increases." Realizing the position that there is antagonism on the part of the employers and there is willingness on the part of the representatives of the people of Assam, I mean the elected representatives of the Legislative Council?—I should like to point out here that the elected representatives of the people are under the present system hardly the representatives of the tea garden population.

F-3304. I shall come to that presently. But the employers are antagonistic to the system of introducing education?—No, there is no special antagonism. I do not think you can read that in the views expressed by Government.

F-3305. Anyhow you will agree with me that they have not done it and do not want to do it, no matter for what reasons. The Council consisting of the representatives of the people of Assam, not necessarily the garden workers, the more honour to them to have suggested certain steps when they do not represent the garden workers. Did the Government compel the tea gardens to introduce this system of education?—I do not think I can go much beyond what Government have stated in their memorandum.

F-3306. Do you consider that this is a satisfactory state of affairs?—I do not entirely. You will find that Government itself admits that the results are disappointing.

F-3307. In the light of the remarks you have made in the introduction to your memorandum, namely, that education is one of the main factors that go to improve the standard of life of the worker has your Government any policy which they intend to put forward in the near future in regard to the improvement of education on the tea gardens?—I have already said that Government recognize its liability not only towards the tea garden labour but towards the entire population. There are many classes of the population which are just as backward, credulous and ignorant as the tea garden labourers. Government is not prepared to hold that any special measures are necessary for tea garden labourers which are not equally necessary for other backward populations under its charge.

F-3308. *The Chairman*: Did not I understand you to say that if the industry itself came forward with a scheme particularly suitable and applicable to the tea garden workers the Government would support it?—I am quite sure it would. I did say so.

F-3309. Quite apart from any general scheme?—Yes.

F-3310. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: In the introduction to your memorandum you have stated that "on the contrary the tendency of this labour force too often is to treat with suspicion and resent any change that is introduced, however well intentioned, and their resentment is quickly fanned into violence." Have you any instance of a change for the betterment of the workers introduced on a tea estate which has resulted in violence?—I am not in a position to give any instance at present without looking up the records.

F-3311. Would you agree with me if I put it like this: if better conditions of employment are guaranteed to the workers on the tea estates they would respond to that?—I do not think any exception can be taken to a proposition as general as that.

F-3312. So far as the private roads of the tea estates are concerned has your Government any policy with regard to their use by outsiders?—I shall send the commission a copy of the resolution of the Government on the subject.

F-3313. In the Labour Immigration Report for 1929, page 4, it is stated: "About 200 coolies of Messa Tea Estate went on strike on the 27th May 1929 and marched to Samaguri about 9 miles off. They were taken back to the garden and most of them resumed work. The refractory coolies were bound down to keep the peace and be of good behaviour for one year. Since then there has been no trouble in the garden and all the coolies are working regularly." Is it the policy of your Government to take such action against coolies who leave their work because they are not satisfied with their conditions of work and bind them down to keep the peace and be of good behaviour for a year?—I

think the full facts are not before the Commission at present. If they were bound down to keep the peace and be of good behaviour for one year, there must have been evidence before the Court to show that it was not merely a case of unwillingness to work; they must have been prepared to use violent methods.

F-3314. You know the section and I know the section. It does not refer to any future violence on the part of those who are bound down. It is section 107. If there is any fear on the part of the magistracy that there may be trouble then the section is put into force. You know that it has been used a number of times merely because it has been found advisable to bind down a particular man. Here is a case where the coolies went on a strike. Is section 107 to be used to bring them back to the garden?—I must demur to your suggestion that it has been used for the purpose of dealing with strikes. If the full facts were before you you would probably find that there was a great deal more in it than you knew now.

F-3315. Could you get us the record of that case?—It is probably in the district in which it happened. We may have some special reports in the Secretariat. We may have a copy of the judgment.

F-3316. *The Chairman*: Is that a case in which there is an appeal pending? Would you supply us with a copy of the judgment for further information?—Yes, I will.

F-3317. *Dewan Chaman Lall*: On page 3 of the same report there is reference made to another case: "Two or three coolies of the Namdang Colliery having assaulted a *chowkidar* were sent for by the manager and one was given two strokes with a cane whereupon some thirty of them assaulted and chased him into a shop where he was beaten. Eight were prosecuted under section 146, Indian Penal Code, of whom six were convicted and sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment." Was any action taken against the manager for the assault?—I am not in a position to tell you. I have not the records before me now.

F-3318. I suppose if it had been it would have been mentioned in this report?—I am unable to say one way or the other.

F-3319. Take the next but one case. "Some 230 Telenga and Uria coolies of Singri Tea Estate walked into Texpur on the 30th May 1929 and filed a petition before the Deputy Commissioner, Darrang, which contained various complaints against the management. The Deputy Commissioner examined the leaders and it appeared to him that the cause of the trouble was the action of the manager in fining some women Re. 1 each for not planting 'pulis' properly. It was also alleged that the manager struck one of the women with a cane. The women and their husbands then refused to go out to work and were joined by others. A section of the armed police was sent out as a precautionary measure. The coolies were persuaded to return to the garden without much difficulty after the Deputy Commissioner had promised to have enquiries made. They also complained about the inadequate pay but this was not the real cause of the trouble. The Assistant Superintendent of Police and subsequently the Superintendent of Police made detailed enquiries and settlement was effected between them." The reason why I refer to this case is this. You have here the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police acting as labour leaders in settling the strike. Does your Government contemplate any better system of settling disputes than this?—I would like you to refer to the answers contained in the Government memorandum, to questions 106 and 107 which give the views of the Assam Government on the point.

F-3320. It is stated that "conditions are changing, and the time may not be far off when it may be necessary to call into being the machinery created by the Trade Disputes Act."?—That is the present opinion of Government.

F-3321. Under the Trade Disputes Act, when any trouble is apprehended, application can be made for a court of enquiry or a board of conciliation, but such court or such board can only be set up either if the Government is willing or if both employers and employees agree to the setting up of such a court or board. You see the difficulty of dealing, under the Trade Disputes Act, with a problem such as we are discussing?—Yes.

F-3322. What is the policy of your Government in the matter?—I am not in a position to say anything beyond what is stated in the paragraph which you have just quoted.

F-3323. Do you think it would help if the roads were thrown open to the public and if outsiders were able to go into the tea estates and get into touch with the workers there in order to organize them on trade union lines?—A good deal would depend on the agent, and whether his intention was to organize a *bona fide* trade union or merely to cause trouble in order to embarrass the management and upset the district generally.

F-3324. Have you any other suggestion to make which would meet the situation, and which would overcome the fact that these gardens are really surrounded by a ring-fence?—I dispute the suggestion that they are surrounded by a ring-fence. The coolies are free to come and go out of the estate, and they do so. They attend the weekly *hats*, where they meet not only other tea garden coolies but members of the general public. They are not enclosed within a ring-fence at all.

F-3325. Perhaps you have not read the Government of India's memorandum which makes almost a similar suggestion. If I am a trade union organizer, and if I am not *persona grata* with the tea garden manager, I can be refused entry on the tea estate, and I can even be refused entry on the private roads which pass through the estate?—Yes, in the same way as a member of the public can be kept from trespassing on a private estate all the world over.

F-3326. Would your Government contemplate taking over these roads under the Land Acquisition Act?—I have already explained that the policy of Government has been set forth in the resolution to which I have referred.

F-3327. *Colonel Russell*: Colonel Murison, what public health staff have you in your Department?—The public health staff in Assam is, I regret to say, very deficient. At present the staff comprises a Director, two Assistant Directors, six temporary *kala-azar* assistant surgeons, 10 municipal health officers, 29 permanent and 10 temporary inspectors and sub-inspectors of vaccination, and 104 temporary *kala-azar* sub-assistant surgeons. In addition, there are 5 epidemic units, each unit consisting of 3 sub-assistant surgeons and 6 disinfectant carriers with the usual menial establishment.

F-3328. You have no district health officers for the different districts of the Province?—No.

F-3329. Have you asked for these officers?—I have pressed the point before Government for the last four or five years.

F-3330. Mr. Laine said that the demand for additional staff had been turned down recently?—It was done not by Government. Government this year has seen its way to finding money for five district health officers. It was put into the list of new schemes for the ensuing year, and placed before the Finance Committee a few days ago at which only four elected members were present. Three were against it and one was in favour of it.

F-3331. Were any of these elected members representatives of the Tea Association?—No.

F-3332. *Colonel Russell*: I take it, therefore, that you have to depend to a very great extent on the Medical Department for carrying out public health work?—The Public Health Department as it exists at present is to all intents and purposes only a skeleton. It requires immediate developing. We are very much behind the times in this Province in the matter of public health.

F-3333. What is your idea as to the organization of such a body?—If we are going to reduce our mortality from acute infectious diseases, we must have a thoroughly efficient and ample staff to deal with epidemics. The organization which I put before the Government four years ago was a second Assistant Director of Public Health (who has since been sanctioned; now we have two), and 8 District Health Officers, and the training of my Vaccination Inspecting Staff for the duties of Rural Sanitary Inspectors. Government considered the question of providing five District Health Officers. I want to train my Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors of Vaccination as Rural Sanitary Inspectors in the elements of sanitation generally, and to be able also to give inoculations against cholera and so forth. At present I have only 39 such Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors, which number is totally inadequate. I propose that Government shall in due course be in a position to give me 101. I propose to locate each one of these officers somewhere in each Thana Circle (one to each circle), where he will be known and where he will be on the spot to receive reports of any outbreaks of epidemics in his circle, and where he can take immediate steps to deal with them. In addition to these rural sanitary inspectors, I propose to have more mobile epidemic units, at least one in each district. In Sylhet I

propose that there should be two, if not three, such units, as cholera is always prevalent there: at the present time there are over 200 cases and 150 deaths in the week. That is a very deplorable and unnecessary loss of life. This is the staff which I propose as the minimum if we are going to function as an efficient department and bring about satisfactory results for Government.

F-3334. At present you have to depend to a considerable extent on the Civil Surgeon, who has very many other duties to perform?—That is why I advocate the creation of these posts of district health officers.

F-3335. Would you prefer a permanent organization in every district?—Yes, run entirely by the Director of Public Health.

F-3336. What would be the cost of your proposals?—The cost for the whole province, as outlined to Government at that time, was approximately Rs. 1,50,000, that was the ultimate recurring cost.

F-3337. What was the amount turned down by the Finance Committee the other day?—Rupees 21,976.

F-3338. I understand that tea gardens constitute one-seventh of the total population of the province?—Yes.

F-3339. In your proposed reorganization of the Public Health Department, what relation would that department have with the population on the tea gardens?—We shall not interfere in any way with the medical officers in charge of tea gardens, but we shall keep in close touch with them. I am sure that the tea garden management generally, and the Branch of the British Medical Association of Assam, would welcome closer co-ordination and co-operation between Government and the tea gardens. So far we have been able to co-operate to a certain extent. When there are outbreaks of cholera or smallpox, we inform the medical officers on the tea gardens of the fact so that they can take necessary defensive measures against the diseases coming into their garden population. We, on the other hand, get the same information from the tea garden managers.

F-3340. The reason I asked the question is that the acting Director in his memorandum says "The Director of Public Health has no contact with tea gardens."—Officially he has not.

F-3341. You deprecate that?—Very strongly.

F-3342. *The Chairman*: Would the point be met by the creation of a Board of Health and Welfare on which you were represented?—Yes, anything which would bring us closer together.

F-3343. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do the tea garden medical officers, although they they have no health diploma, respond to suggestions?—They are very amenable to reason. I have never had any difficulty with them at all. They have generally acted up to my suggestions.

F-3344. *Mr. Cliff*: With regard to organization and administration, would you favour treating the tea industry as a unit, or would you prefer that the matter should be dealt with in districts, through the organization which you have for the whole Province?—It would be better if it were done through districts because things which are applicable in one area may not be suitable in another. I think that if the suggested Board was not too large it would work with much greater efficiency.

F-3345. *The Chairman*: Do you think you might lose some of the special interest and power of the tea industry?—I do not think the tea gardens would lose anything by it. They have everything to gain by it. Cordial assistance and help to one another would make for greater efficiency.

F-3346. *Colonel Russell*: Have you any Public Health Act in the province?—No.

F-3347. Have you legislation of any kind dealing with public health?—Under the Assam Municipal Act there are certain clauses which deal with public health.

F-3348. Have you any such clauses in the Local Boards Act?—There are certain Public Health provisions in the Local Self-Government Act of Assam.

F-3349. Do you not think there should be some legislation on these lines?—Yes. I suggested it to the Royal Commission on Agriculture.

F-3350. If legislation was brought into force dealing with public health in local board areas, would you make it applicable to the tea gardens in the

districts concerned?—I think so, but it would be a matter which would have to be gone into because the subjects would be very large and varied. Any sick legislation would have to be developed along such lines as would be acceptable.

F-3351. Are any of your staff trained in anti-malarial work?—Both my Assistant Directors of Public Health have attended courses on malaria, and have passed the necessary examinations.

F-3352. Do you envisage at any time a special anti-malarial organization for dealing definitely with anti-malarial work in the Province?—When the finances of the Province will permit, perhaps something may be done. We could carry on research work into malaria at the present time which would not require very much in the way of money, but for any large organized anti-malarial campaign in the province much money would be required.

F-3353. We have been told on more than one occasion that when anti-malarial recommendations have been made they have not resulted in very much improvement. One manager told us that if he had spent the money on the lines which had been suggested to him by an anti-malarial expert, it would have been thrown away?—I understand that a certain amount of anti-malarial work necessitating a considerable expenditure of money has been done in certain gardens in Assam, and as far as I know, the results obtained have not been commensurate with the amount of money which has been spent. They have gone about it on the wrong lines. Conditions that prevail in Malay are totally different from those which prevail in Assam.

F-3354. For the Province of Assam you require an expert anti-malarial staff?—We require a wholetime malarialogist.

F-3355. During recent years your biggest problem has been *kala-azar*?—It has loomed prominently and we have carried out an extensive campaign, and Government have spent money handsomely.

F-3356. Has the whole cost of this *kala-azar* work been borne by Government?—Yes, entirely. In one year we treated nearly 70,000 patients. That number has now been reduced to under 20,000.

F-3357. We have been told that cholera is endemic in Assam?—I would not say that it is endemic, but we have always got it with us. It is chiefly due to people drinking from contaminated water channels into which poor people frequently throw their dead, to eating over-ripe fruit, and so forth.

F-3358. Is there much of it occurring on tea gardens?—Generally not, because the moment it breaks out prompt precautionary measures are taken by the management.

F-3359. On some of the gardens we have visited we have seen a considerable amount of hookworm. The Government memorandum says "Dr. Jameson is of opinion that hookworm is mostly contracted on the garden,"—I have not had the opportunity of studying that question, but the opinion generally held is that it is prevalent in tea gardens and is contracted through the soil.

F-3360. The memorandum also says that some conservancy system is required?—A good deal has been done on tea gardens in that connection. Special precautions for the provisions of *aqua* privies and septic tanks, and so forth, have been taken.

F-3361. Do you think that coolies generally would use latrines if they were provided?—They will have to be taught. In some gardens in spite of what has been done, the management has had difficulties in that connection.

F-3362. If there was a septic tank system in the lines of an estate, and that was provided with a flush-out and so on, and kept properly clean, do you think the coolies would use it?—I think they could be induced to use it, ultimately.

F-3363. It is laid down that a garden can only be labelled unhealthy if the death rate is 7 per cent., i.e., 70 per thousand. Do you consider that figure unduly high? Would you be in favour of reducing it to, say, 4 per cent.?—Yes, I think it could be reduced.

F-3364. Are you doing any child welfare work in the province?—A certain amount.

F-3365. Do you think there would be any difficulty in inducing tea estate managers to develop that kind of work on their estates?—No. Provided it was organized on proper lines, I think they would welcome it.

F-3366. Do you think there would be any difficulty in getting suitable women to do health visitor work?—I should not think so.

F-3367. Has the Government any proposal for the training of health visitors?—They train a certain number of *dais*. That is done through the Medical Department.

F-3368. The Government have a scheme for the training of *dais*?—Yes.

F-3369. Would you be in favour of the development of a health visitors' scheme?—Yes.

F-3370. Would there be any difficulty in appointing one or two lady medical officers for supervising that work?—If the whole maternity and child welfare work on tea gardens was organized on good lines I am sure that the tea management generally in the province would welcome a form of provision of that kind.

F-3371. Under present arrangements, are you an Inspector of Factories on tea gardens?—No. The official Inspectors of Factories are the Civil Surgeon and the Deputy Commissioner. All unhealthy estates in a district are inspected once by the Civil Surgeon and thereafter annually by the Deputy Commissioners.

F-3372. Have you any official power to go into any garden you like and inspect it?—No. I go there by invitation and, at the request of the manager, of the garden.

F-3373. Would it not be advisable for you to be an official Inspector?—I do not anticipate any difficulty if I was.

F-3374. Has the suggestion ever been made?—Not to my knowledge.

F-3375. We visited the hospital at Gauhati for the accommodation of coolies coming to and going back from the gardens. I understand that that hospital is financed half by the Government of India and half by the Tea Districts Association. When I inspected it I found that a very considerable proportion of the patients came from the municipality and from local boards?—Probably they were people living in rural areas who had been taken ill within municipal limits. The municipality pays for each patient.

F-3376. Who gets the receipts?—The Government of India.

F-3377. Do you have any power to inspect this hospital?—Yes. That hospital is directly under me.

F-3378. *Rev. Saikia*: Do the parents of children on tea estates send their children to school on their own initiative or do you think persuasion is necessary?—(*Mr. Laine*) Only a very small proportion of the coolies willingly send their children to school. They will only do so if a certain amount of pressure is applied.

F-3379. We know that the earnings of a child go to swell the family earnings. Do you think it possible to supplement the earnings of the parents during the time their children are at school?—The matter of compensating the parents for a possible loss in their earnings through sending their children to school is one for the tea industry to consider.

Colonel Garbett: On one of my estates we found that the children were not attending schools in the numbers we desired. We therefore tried a system of sending them to school for an hour during their working time, for which period they were paid. I am sorry to say that the experiment failed after a few months.

F-3380. *Rev. Saikia*: Cannot the small children on the tea gardens be compelled to go to school?—I think it would be a difficult proposition.

F-3381. Do the gardens supply good schools for the children with properly trained masters?—The practice varies a good deal. Some gardens have started good schools with trained masters. On the other hand I have seen one or two tea gardens where the schools were poorly staffed. Where the manager has taken a continuous interest in the matter some measure of success has been achieved.

F-3382. *Miss Power*: In the memorandum of the Government of Assam it is stated, dealing with the question of maternity benefit, "if legislation is required, the utmost that need be enacted would be the fixing of a minimum benefit, the utmost discretion being allowed to the local Government to prescribe by rule or executive order the estates to which it should apply and the manner in which it should be enforced." Would your Government be in favour of a scheme of compulsory maternity benefits for tea gardens in order to bring all gardens up to a uniform level?—That question has already been dealt with in another portion of

the memorandum. There are very few gardens indeed in which substantial maternity benefits are not now being given.

F-3383. What about the exceptions?—I admit that, if there were legislation empowering Government to apply some form of compulsion, it would remedy those particular cases which are now outside the general scheme.

F-3384. Both as to the extent of the benefit and the amount of time that the woman could remain off work?—Yes.

F-3385. The memorandum states that the Government was against the Bill, because the apprehension was freely expressed that such an enactment might result in a reduction of the generous maternity benefits now enjoyed to the minimum which would be prescribed by law. That is an argument which has been brought forward almost universally in respect, for instance, of the fixing of minimum rates of wages, namely, that it would reduce the earnings of all workers to the minimum, but that argument has been proved, in every country concerned to have no foundation. Have you any serious reason to think that those tea garden managers who have found it economically profitable to pay a generous maternity benefit, would reduce it because there was an actual minimum fixed by law?—Those who had found it economically profitable to pay generous maternity benefit would no doubt continue to do so even though legislation might fix a lower minimum benefit.

F-3386. Is not the whole idea behind the present scheme of maternity benefits that it is economically profitable?—That is so. There are cases, however, in which possibly some short-sighted concerns might take advantage of the minimum prescribed by law, and reduce their present benefits.

F-3387. If this were so, such cases would be offset by the fact that the minimum would be enforced on all gardens?—Yes.

F-3388. If the matter came up again, have you any reason to believe that the Government would revise its attitude?—I think the Government will be prepared to give this matter very serious consideration and to see whether it will not be possible to devise some means of roping in those gardens which are now outside these schemes and which do not give maternity benefits.

F-3389. Do you not think that there should be some compulsion exercised on tea garden managers to take steps to notify the relations of recruited labourers when deaths take place?—Yes, I do.

F-3390. There is also the even more important question of orphans. Where both the parents die, I understand that the gardens have arrangements whereby they bring up those orphans as potential workers. No steps are taken to find out whether those children might not be returned to their relations in the villages from which their parents were originally recruited. Do you not think there should be a legal obligation on the managers to ascertain whether the relations of the children desire their return to their villages?—I certainly think that more steps should be taken than are now taken to enable coolies to correspond at more regular intervals with the homes from which they come. That would cover the case of the intimation of any deaths to which you have referred.

F-3391. Do you think that an orphan child should necessarily be obliged to become a tea garden coolie because its parents happened to have died on the tea garden?—No, but it is quite possible that there may be no one in the children's villages who would be willing to undertake the responsibility of educating them and bringing them up.

F-3392. But do you not think that steps should be taken to ascertain whether that is the position or not?—Government would raise no objection to an arrangement of that kind under which a tea garden manager should make some enquiry as to whether there is anybody in the village from which the parents of the children came who would be willing and able to take charge of them and look after them.

F-3393. The memorandum also states: "It must be remembered that in Assam the demand for labour exceeds the supply and where such a condition exists, wages generally will be comparatively high." Would you say that that rule applied in the case of the illiterate and often primitive garden coolie who is quite unconscious of any connection between his economic value and his scarcity, and who is quite incapable of bargaining with his employer as to his industrial value?—If you take into consideration the fact that wages here are not only in the form of cash, but in the form of other benefits received, when labour is scarce the wages will necessarily be comparatively high.

F-3394. Would you say that the garden coolie is being paid at a comparatively high rate because of his scarcity?—I think he is being paid a very decent wage. That is shown by the fact that from many of the surrounding villages labour comes willingly into the gardens. It would not do so if the rates paid were utterly inadequate.

F-3395. They come willingly, but they have no real knowledge of the fact that they have an increased bargaining power because of their scarcity?—They do not think about it, I agree.

F-3396. They do not know the implication between scarcity of labour and bargaining power?—No.

F-3397. The economic truth of that statement lies only where there is a reasonable equality in education between the employer and the employee?—I do not think the mentality of the coolie has much to do with it. The question is whether, in a district where there is a comparative scarcity of labour, wages will not necessarily be above the minimum economic level.

F-3398. Has it ever been known that a bunch of coolies recruited to a garden have actually bargained with the employer as to the rate that should be paid to them because of the relative scarcity of labour on that particular garden?—I have no information on that point, but coolies have been brought experimentally to Assam from recruiting districts by garden managements in order that they might be able to look round and see what the life is like and the kind of pay they get. If they have been satisfied they go back and bring their families. I have known of specific instances in which coolies who have been brought up to Assam under those conditions have gone back and brought their families here. The presumption must be that they were satisfied with the conditions as they found them on the estate.

F-3399. Do you not feel that, on the whole, it would be advisable to have one or more inspectors to specialize on tea garden inspection?—It may become necessary, because the District Officers' and Subdivisional Officers' work is increasing year by year.

F-3400. Is there not a certain embarrassment to a District Magistrate between his dual capacity as a District Magistrate and an Inspector of gardens?—There is at times, but it is embarrassment which is felt in other spheres also.

F-3401. If you were able to have such specialized officers, how many do you think you would require for adequate inspection of the gardens—one in each valley?—That point would require a good deal of consideration.

F-3402. How does the salary of the one Factory Inspector for Assam, for which you are advertising, compare with that of the Bengal officer out-housed at Jalpaiguri?—I have no information, but I will let you know that later.

F-3403. Will you be able to tell us how much ground he would have to cover as compared with the Jalpaiguri officer?—I do not know anything about the latter officer.

F-3404. It has been stated in the Government evidence that no effort has been made on any tea garden to establish any form of adult education. Would the Director of Public Instruction be able to supply any manager, who wanted to inaugurate classes of that kind, instructions as to the best method for carrying them on?—I am quite sure that the Director of Public Instruction would give such advice to the best of his ability.

F-3405. It would have to be personal advice? There are no pamphlets issued on the subject?—I do not think there are any pamphlets of that kind.

F-3406. Mr. Clow: Will you refer to the letter of February 1929 to the Government of India on the revision of the Assam Labour and Emigration Act. The effect of the proposal contained therein would be practically to give the employers' security against enticement, would it not?—I think that would be one of the effects—one of the intentions anyhow.

F-3407. Do you not think that would be fraught with considerable danger?—It is a very difficult subject. I am hardly qualified to express an opinion on the question of the desirability of this or that form of legislation.

F-3408. Some of us have got the impression already that the labourers on some tea estates generally are not quite as free as we should like to see. There is not that free operation of demand and supply to which your memorandum alludes elsewhere. Would not this proposal have the effect of strengthening the employer as against the employee?—I think this point is its further consideration from that point of view.

F-3409. As regards the local Government's letter on the Workmen's Compensation Act, it is suggested that any relative who proves that he or she was actually dependent should be added to the definition of "dependent." In other words, that would be altering the persons entitled to claim compensation from "relatives" to actual dependents?—The idea is that this is a matter in which the Commissioner might very well be allowed some discretion in interpreting the provisions as to whom compensation should be paid.

F-3410. If you made this alteration, would it not be only fair to the employer that persons who were not actually dependent should be excluded? Suppose at present the deceased leaves a single relative coming within the category mentioned in the Act. That relative may not be actually dependent. Under the Act as it at present stands, compensation must be paid to that relative in full. In other words, it goes on the principle of paying compensation to relatives and not to dependents. You propose to add dependents. Is it not rather questionable to add dependents and leave in relatives who are not dependents?—I do not think the wording of the section has been examined from that point of view.

F-3411. I take it that if tea gardens are included within the scope of the Act, although a very large number of persons will be protected, the number of additional cases will probably be very small?—I agree.

F-3412. Do you consider there is much excessive drinking on tea gardens?—There is a great deal.

F-3413. Looking through the Excise Manual, I came across a somewhat curious rule by which prosecutions in respect of the possession of *pachwai* were not to be instituted in gardens without the consent of the manager of the garden?—I believe there is an executive instruction to that effect.

F-3414. Is the idea underlying that that a manager can be trusted to see that his coolies do not possess any excessive amount of *pachwai*?—The idea is to prevent the letting loose on tea gardens of excise subordinates, who might upset the whole labour force and precipitate a riot which it would be left for the Government to deal with afterwards.

F-3415. I take it that this rule would prevent even the Deputy Commissioner from instituting a prosecution unless the manager consented?—That is not the idea. What generally happens is when it comes to the attention of the Deputy Commissioner that illegal practices are being carried on in tea gardens, the Deputy Commissioner has to arrange for a raid to be made in consultation with, and in conjunction with, the garden manager in such a way as not to upset the labour force more than need be. That is the intention of the instruction. It does not mean that no prosecution is to be instituted without the consent of the manager. I am sure that is not either the wording or the intention of the instruction.

F-3416. The wording is "In the case of coolies resident on tea gardens, prosecutions in respect of *pachwai* should not be instituted for possession above the legal maximum except at the request of the manager of the tea estate?"—*Pachwai* brewing has hitherto been dealt with in a class by itself, in the same way as in the hill districts *pachwai* brewing is freely allowed.

F-3417. In other words, the law is not in conformity with what the Government regard as reasonable?—For various reasons it has hitherto been held inadvisable to interfere with that particular form of drink.

F-3418. In what parts of the province is there a tenancy law giving coolies rights over land which they have cultivated for a specified period?—There is no tenancy law proper in the Upper Assam districts. There is an antiquated Tenancy Act in force in Sylhet and a Tenancy Act has recently been passed for Goalpara.

F-3419. Do you agree with the view expressed by some managers that if they offer higher rates of pay they will not get any more work done; that the coolie works to a fixed amount of money and cannot be induced to earn more?—I think there is something in that. It has been shown by experience in the past that when there has been an increase in the rate of wages, in many cases the coolie has not been better off but has simply worked for a shorter time. He works enough just to earn sufficient to keep himself going and to have a little over for his modest extra needs.

F-3420. If that were generally true it would be impossible to raise wages apart from a depreciation of the currency; it would be impossible to raise real wages?—I do not say it is generally true, but it is true in a number of cases.

F-3421. *The Chairman*: In some cases it has been admitted to have had a temporary effect, which has worn off after a short time?—I think that has been the case in some instances.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Mr. F. C. KING, I.C.S., Chairman, Assam Labour Board.

F-3422. *The Chairman*: I understand that you are the Chairman of the Assam Labour Board which is an appointment in the hands of the Government of India; is that so?—Yes.

F-3423. Since when have you held that post?—Since April 1928.

F-3424. And previously had you any experience of the conditions in Assam?—No.

F-3425. What were your duties prior to that?—I was the Deputy Commissioner at Sambalpur in Bihar and Orissa.

F-3426. Then you had experience of the recruiting district from the other end?—Yes, for many years.

F-3427. For how many years?—I was first posted to a recruiting district as a subdivisional officer of Gumla in the Ranchi district in 1914, and I spent four years there. I went back in a judicial capacity to Ranchi for a short time; I was for 2½ years in Sambalpur. Altogether, I have been in the districts where a good deal of recruiting goes on for 6½ years.

F-3428. Did you have an opportunity of coming into close contact with the actual recruits or potential recruits for Assam?—I did.

F-3429. And you feel that you came to know fairly well the reasons which led them to come or not to come, as the case may be, to the tea gardens?—I have got a good idea.

F-3430. For the last year and nine months you have been the Chairman of the Labour Board?—Yes.

F-3431. Would you tell me exactly how your duties are carried out in that respect? You are a full-time officer, I suppose, and you have no other duties?—No.

F-3432. And the Board, apart from yourself, consists of?—Fifteen representatives of the tea industry.

F-3433. How often does the Board meet?—Twice a year normally, in March and September.

F-3434. How is the work actually carried out with such a small number of meetings?—There is an executive committee which is consulted if any matter arises on which their advice is needed, and if any member of the executive committee considers that the matter should be referred to the whole Board that is done very often by correspondence and circulating papers.

F-3435. Where does the Board meet?—It always has met at Calcutta, but it may meet anywhere if summoned.

F-3436. Your colleagues on the Board are representatives of the Tea Association?—There are 8 representatives of the agency houses representing the Indian Tea Association, Calcutta, and the London branch, and there are four representatives of the Assam Valley Branch and 3 of the Surma Valley Branch. The representatives from the Assam and Surma Valleys represent the planters, and the Calcutta representatives represent the agency houses.

F-3437. The duties of the Board are solely confined to the supervision of recruiting?—Yes.

F-3438. You have nothing whatever to do with the condition of the garden workers once they are delivered on to the plantations?—No.

F-3439. I suppose your colleagues all being men who have many other duties to carry, it is only occasionally that you meet them?—Yes.

F-3440. For the most part you are working entirely alone?—Yes.

F-3441. Have you a staff of clerks?—I have got two clerks and a stenographer. I have also three supervisors.

F-3442. Are the supervisors under your orders and do they inspect local agents?—Yes.

F-3443. Where are they stationed?—One is stationed at Ranchi, one at Raipur and one at Waltair.

F-3444. Your own headquarters lie in Calcutta?—Yes.

F-3445. How frequently do you yourself travel about the recruiting areas?—I inspect practically every local agency at least once, and I pay about two visits to Assam a year.

F-3446. Can you tell me the total annual cost of the Board?—It is just under Rs. 1½ lakhs.

F-3447. In your memorandum you recount the advantages of the tea garden workers' life and you say "...it will not occasion surprise to find that the labour force is on the whole well off, happy and contented." On what did you base that opinion?—I based it on my visits to the tea gardens.

F-3448. Then you do visit the tea gardens?—As I have already explained, I go about twice or three times a year to Assam. It is not part of my duty, but it has been the practice I follow.

F-3449. Although your official duties are merely the supervision of recruitment, you do make it a practice of visiting the gardens to see what the conditions are?—Yes, and to consult managers.

F-3450. In your memorandum there is a phrase I do not quite understand. You say "The abolition of restrictive labour rules, which is now under contemplation by the tea industry, will contribute further to the progress of the coolies." What is the abolition that you are speaking of there?—At the time when I was writing this memorandum the industry, I understood, were considering the abolition or modification of their existing labour rules. I have no information what progress has been made since then.

F-3451. Then you say that short-term recruitment has proved remarkably successful in Ranchi district. Are you speaking there merely because of the numbers who have been taken under that, 6, 9 and 12 months' system?—Yes.

F-3452. You do not know how far it has been economical?—I do not imply that I consider it an economical system at all.

F-3453. You tell us that the high commission paid by managers to *sardars* has brought into existence a plentiful supply of petty professional recruiters in the guise of garden *sardars*. We have ourselves come across one or two cases of that kind, but your experience would appear to go further. To what extent do you think there are men who are making it a profession and who go free?—I think in some districts there are a considerable number. In a district like Ranchi, which is an old recruiting field of the industry, I do not think there are very many, but I find that in the Central Provinces and in the United Provinces they are more frequent.

F-3454. Men who go on changing from garden to garden and getting sent down after a few weeks; is that the practice?—Yes, and who employ *arkattis* to procure coolies for them.

F-3455. *Colonel Garbett*: Have you any figures to show how many professional recruiters there are?—No.

F-3456. You are making a general statement?—Yes; some have come to my notice.

F-3457. *The Chairman*: I see you say here that you frequently find instances of garden *sardars* being sent down to recruit after spending a few days on the garden?—Yes.

F-3458. *Colonel Garbett*: Do you consider it wrong to do that?—I think a few days is probably wrong because it would indicate, I think, that he had come up with the promise that he would be sent down again. I know that it is sometimes said that these men come up to see the gardens before recruiting their own relations, and that may be an explanation in a number of cases.

F-3459. The local agencies may ask for the quick return of the *sardar*?—Yes. The *sardar* may go up simply with a view to inspect the conditions in the gardens before he decides to take up his own family.

F-3460. *The Chairman*: Why inspecting the conditions, because to be a *sardar* he must have already worked on the garden?—He comes up as a coolie and goes down as a *sardar* after a few days.

F-3461. *Mr. Clow*: Whatever the merits of the system may be, that was not what the Act contemplated?—No.

Colonel Garbett: The new coolie makes most recruiting.

F-3462. *The Chairman*: I suppose what happens is this: If a new worker goes up and says "Well, I have several relations and I can bring them up," he gets round the manager and gets another free trip whether or not he turns up again to that garden?—Yes.

F-3463. He may get himself recruited by another *sardar* to another garden?—That is not at all unheard of.

F-3464. These gentlemen are not quite innocent as some people would make out?—No; the very clever ones generally become known.

F-3465. Anyhow the effect of your examination of the present system is that you speak of the breakdown of the *sardari* system, which is inadequate to the needs of the industry, and you recommend for our consideration a proposal that there should be a more elastic system. And I think that system may be summed up by saying that although you would not wipe out the *sardari* system at one blow, you would set up side by side with it a system which would probably reduce the *sardari* system to perhaps a half or one-third of what it is now as the new system was successful?—I think that the scope for *sardari* recruitment is very limited, as it is supposed to be confined to acquaintances and relatives of the *sardar*. That is the original idea; it is not in the law, but that was the idea put forward at the time the *sardari* recruitment ousted the contractor system.

F-3466. You would suggest that there should be responsible accredited agents allowed to recruit, but under the same control and veto as the *sardars* are at the present time?—I would not exactly say under the same control and veto as the *sardars* are; I would propose modifications in control.

F-3467. You would allow more liberty?—Yes.

F-3468. We have it somewhere that these recruiting agents should be required to deposit a fairly substantial security for good behaviour. Is that contained in your note?—No.

F-3469. But I take it that your suggestion is that he should be a man with some position and responsibility in the area in which he recruited?—I do not think you should lay that down. I would leave the employer absolutely free to choose his own agent, and the only restriction I would suggest would be that if this agent misbehaves and proves an undesirable person, the District Magistrate should have power to prohibit further recruitment by him.

F-3470. We have been considering a suggestion that possibly one of the most important solutions of the present trouble would be a guaranteed repatriation at the end of a reasonable period, let us say three years, of the tea garden worker if on any ground he found the life unsuitable to himself or he desired not to settle permanently in Assam. Will that not remove many of the prejudices which still exist against going into Assam and would in itself substantially increase the flow of recruits so that much more careful selection would be made in the recruiting areas? Have you anything to say about a suggestion of that kind?—I think that anything which would ensure that the coolie visited his home more frequently would popularize recruitment, but at the same time I do not think that there should be any legislation on the subject of repatriation and that any fixed term for repatriation should be laid down. I have two reasons for that: In the first place, I think that it should be a voluntary agreement between the employer and his labour, such as exists in short-term recruitment and in Bombay recruitment, and it has been found that the employer can be thoroughly trusted to honour these agreements. I think it would be a mistake for the State to interfere by legislation or any compulsory system, as the ideal is to get away as far as possible from State interference and leave the problem to settle itself. Secondly, I fear that if any fixed term were laid down for repatriation, the coolie, who is a very ignorant person, might feel that he was bound for that term and that he would not consider himself so free to go and come as if there were no term fixed. I would prefer to see the coolie allowed to provide for his own repatriation if the employer did not enter into a voluntary agreement, and his wages should be calculated on the scale which would enable him to save the cost of repatriation and a little over after a fixed period.

F-3471. You mean that if it were made plain to the coolie in the dépôt when he was recruited, as it presumably would have been by the *sardar* who recruited him, that he would be repatriated at the garden expense if he so desired not later than at the end of three years, that would lead him to think that he was bound for three years?—I think it would be quite possible that he would consider that he entered into a contract for three years.

F-3472. Even if during that period he had himself gone down as a sardar on leave?—Yes, I think so.

F-3473. But you are no doubt aware the feeling still remains in many of the recruiting areas that when a man goes to Assam he is gone for ever?—It certainly did exist very strongly, but I think it is dying away.

F-3474. Your further recommendation is one based on the Ceylon system that instead of employers recruiting for individual gardens or groups of gardens under one management, the whole of the recruiting for Assam should be pooled....?—The expenses should be pooled.

F-3475. But would you allow a recruit to say "I will go to a particular garden, not to any other"?—Certainly. What I intend to convey by my proposal is that the employer's own recruiter will recruit the men for his own garden.

F-3476. Then your only suggestion in that respect is the pooling of the expenses so as to avoid competition in fixing higher rates of commission to the sardars?—That is my idea.

F-3477. Under this system that you suggest, would the Tea Districts Labour Association be still required to exist?—Yes. The system which I have suggested does not involve taking over recruitment at all; the recruitment would have to be carried on by the Tea Districts Labour Association or whatever other organization the employers may prefer to have, but I should like to see the forwarding done by the employers' agency. It is only on condition that the Tea Districts Labour Association or other employers' association refuses to forward that I have made an alternative suggestion that forwarding should be undertaken by an Immigration Fund Committee. So that the only function which I would take away from the Tea Districts Labour Association would be the registration of coolies.

F-3478. With whom would you entrust that?—I would entrust it to the staff of official registering officers.

F-3479. When you say "official," do you mean Government?—Probably it would be Government.

F-3480. The Local Government or the Central Government?—The Central Government.

F-3481. Would that be an additional expense to the total on recruitment?—I expect it would be. It would depend on what view the Central Government took. The expenses have to be provided somehow, and I imagine that they would be provided by registration fees or some such charge.

F-3482. On what reason do you recommend that transfer of registration?—The tea industry have themselves asked for the control of recruitment, and I consider that some form of supervision is desirable. I consider that my system of registration by a cadre of official registering officers would enable control over recruitment to be reduced to the minimum, and it is with this end in view that I propose that registration should be handed over to official registering officers specially appointed for the purpose. If any form of official control is to be maintained, the control should be in direct touch with what is going on in the recruiting field. To ensure this, registration must be done by officials and not by employers' agents. Registration is the stage at which recruiting abuses come to light, and the only simple and direct way of ensuring that the controlling authority will know what is going on is that registration should be in the hands of officers working under the controller or controlling body. If registering officers had power to reject recruits on the ground of undue influence, fraud, misrepresentation or coercion in their recruitment, practically no further check would be required and recruitment would be practically free. In my opinion, registration should take place in the recruiting districts and not in Assam. It may be asked why should registration be taken out of the hands of the Tea Districts Labour Association and similar associations. So long as the Assam Labour Board system continues, registration could be done by local agents as though local agents are not servants of the Labour Board, which is the controlling authority; they are *de facto* subordinate to it, inasmuch as the Board is a body representative of the employers for whom the local agents work. If, as I understand, the Indian Tea Association proposes, the Assam Labour Board is abolished and if in consequence an official authority is set up to take its place, the local agents would not be subordinate to the official authority; their real loyalty would be to their employers. Even under the Assam Labour Board system I do not consider the system of registration by local agents who are also concerned in recruitment is satisfactory. The local agents are expected by the employers to do all they can to see that the employers get labourers and at the same time they are required by law to act as a check

on their employers for the District Magistrate. It is an unnatural position, and it is only due to constant supervision that it can be maintained. I would like to see local agents relieved from such an incongruous position and left free to devote themselves whole-heartedly to the promotion of recruitment for their employers instead of spending more than half their time checking it. My system would not involve the abolition of the Ten Districts Labour Association. It would merely free their local agents for their proper work, namely, promotion of recruitment, and would leave recruitment, forwarding, etc., still in the hands of the Tea Districts Labour Association.

F-3483. Your complaint, I understand, is that they have in one sense to act in the interests of their employers and in the other sense they are *quasi*-public officials for certain public duties imposed upon them?—Yes. It would be much preferable if that duty could be performed by real public officials.

F-3484. Do you think that that accounts for some small number of cases one hears of quite unsuitable persons getting into the gardens and having to be sent back?—I have no complaints to make against local agents.

F-3485. *Colonel Garbett*: Referring to the Assam Labour Board, how was it, first of all, called into being? Was it not constituted at the express wish of the tea industry to help them to clear up the abuses that were being made after the Act ceased?—Yes.

F-3486. Would you kindly let us know what type of labourer you consider suitable for tea gardens? Do you think anybody would do?—I do not think so. I think that the agricultural type of labourer is required and that the aboriginal agriculturist is the best.

F-3487. But if the other types are also suitable for tea gardens, do you think the gardens would be able to get all the labour they require if they could take everybody?—I think that if they took every one they would have much less difficulty than they have, but I think they would get a lot of unsuitable labour.

F-3488. Because the industrial class of labour is not suitable to the Assam tea gardens, therefore perhaps that may be counted as one of the reasons why we are short of labour?—Some types of industrial labour are not suited while certain types are suited. Most industries take the same kind of labourer as you take, but they take other types too which are not suitable to you. You are more particular about the type of labour you recruit than most industries are.

F-3489. We want an agriculturist and a man who is likely to settle down in Assam?—Yes.

F-3490. In your memorandum you speak of establishment of public employment agencies for recruitment of labour for Assam. Do you think that such a system would work well?—It is impossible to say without having seen it in action whether it would work, but I certainly think that it is very well worth trying.

F-3491. *The Chairman*: Do you mean to set up public recruiting agencies manned by civil servants as an experiment?—No. I mean by employment agency an office where any one seeking work could be put into touch with an employer who needs labour.

F-3492. If the experiment failed would they not all require compensation for loss of office?—I suppose they would unless they were temporarily employed. By "experiment" I mean there should be selected areas where it would be started to see how it would work.

F-3493. You would try in one area where there is naturally a large field for recruitment, like Ranchi?—I do not wish to specify any particular place, but I would try in one or more places.

F-3494. *Colonel Garbett*: Do you consider the local agents appointed under the Act have proved trustworthy and efficient? In the event of all restrictions being withdrawn, would local Governments be willing to leave the work of supervising recruitment to them?—I cannot answer for the local Governments.

F-3495. Do you not think that the local Governments would be willing to trust the local agents?—I cannot say whether they would be willing or not.

F-3496. In your experience you find the local agents to be trustworthy and efficient?—Yes.

F-3497. You do not know whether local Governments would trust them with the work of supervising recruitment?—No.

F-3498. You have never discussed with them?—I am not in a position to express an opinion.

F-3499. Do you attribute the high cost of recruitment to the restrictions imposed by Act VI?—Yes, undoubtedly that is a contributory factor.

F-3500. You consider that the abolition of the present restrictions would tend to promote a freer flow of labour?—Yes, certainly.

F-3501. You say that the monopoly of the Tea Districts Labour Association could not be maintained without legal backing and that it does not exist in Dooars recruitment nor in recruitment for Assam from Bombay. Do you not think that the extent of the monopoly of the Tea Districts Labour Association in the case of Dooars recruitment is practically the same as in the case of Assam?—I do not consider it is.

F-3502. Your statement that it does not exist in Bombay, I am informed, is not quite correct?—Until very recently there were other agencies but I am told that they have gone out of the field; I am not certain. Bombay is not under me I should explain: Act VI does not apply to Bombay.

F-3503. By whom is your salary paid?—Rupees 500 is paid by the Government of India and the remainder is paid by the Assam Labour Board from the cess they levy on *sardars* and emigrants.

F-3504. *Mr. Clow*: The Government of India also bear charges for pension and leave?—Yes.

F-3505. *The Chairman*: How are your travelling expenses met?—Out of the Assam Labour Board fund.

F-3506. *Colonel Garbett*: Do you consider that the systems under which recruitment is done for Ceylon and Malay are superior to that of Assam? Can you tell us about the complete monopoly on which these systems are based in contrast with the partial monopoly of the Tea Districts Labour Association?—What do you mean by the complete monopoly on which these systems are based?

F-3507. You appear to consider that the systems of Ceylon and Malay recruitment are superior to that of Assam?—I think each recruiter gets more recruits and the cost of recruitment is much lower. In these two respects I certainly think that the systems are superior.

F-3508. They are based on a system of monopoly, I might say, are they not, to which you object in the case of Assam?—No, but there is complete official control in both those cases.

F-3509. Was not the present system started by the planters themselves, in the first instance? Then afterwards Government found it working very smoothly and they gave it an official status as it were?—I think the Government found it working quite the contrary; they took it over and set it right.

F-3510. Is that so?—That is my impression.

F-3511. I think that is not quite correct from the information that I gathered. In the first instance, the system was set up by the planters and afterwards the Government gave it an official status. It is more or less monopoly in the case of Malay and Ceylon?—It is official control.

Mr. Cliff: In what sense are you using the word "monopoly"?

Colonel Garbett: I am only quoting the word used by Mr. King in his memorandum. I do not quite understand what he means.

F-3512. *Mr. Cliff*: What does it imply?—The meaning I attach to "monopoly" in this memorandum, when speaking of the Tea Districts Labour Association monopoly, is that practically no other association can render recruiting services except the Tea Districts Labour Association, who have got a complete monopoly of recruiting work. I am not blaming the Tea Districts Labour Association but am blaming the system.

F-3513. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you suggest that you turned down applications from other people because your Board consists of tea planters chiefly?—I think it is human nature that people will not welcome rivals.

F-3514. Have you actually turned down applications from people to form associations and do you say that it was done because the members of the Board were all planters?—The only application I have had was an application from certain Indian Managers who wanted to form an association.

F-3515. Did you turn it down?—No.

F-3516. Can you quote any other case?—For instance, the Doon Dooma company, which is a very large company and recruits a very large number of

labourers applied for setting up a separate recruiting agency, and this was not approved of by the Assam Labour Board.

F-3517. *The Chairman*: Do you think it would be practicable to have half a dozen channels all of them permitted to establish new systems of recruiting?—I think each employer might be able to do his own recruiting. If he found to his benefit to join a large association then he should be free to do so, but if he wished to do his own recruiting he should be allowed to do so.

F-3518. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What was the reason for turning down the Doom Dooma application by the Assam Labour Board?—The chief reason, I think, was that they did not want to have other recruiting organizations in the field. If Doom Dooma broke away it was thought that various other companies would also break away from the Tea Districts Labour Association and the results might not be desirable.

F-3519. *Colonel Garbett*: The board, if I remember the case aright, advised the Doom Dooma company not to break away, and the Superintendent thought it over and changed his mind afterwards?—I do not know, I only know that the Board did not recommend the application.

F-3520. *The Chairman*: Is there, in fact, an association of Indian managed gardens with a separate system to-day?—No association exists at present; an application is pending.

F-3521. *Sir Alexander Murray*: We were told that there were three or four associations working at Ranchi?—There are 3 or 4 independent agencies.

F-3522. *Colonel Garbett*: I should like to explain that the Tea Districts Labour Association was started about 35 years ago. About five or six Calcutta firms joined together with a view to cutting out competition and formed the Tea Districts Labour Association. The growth of the Tea Districts Labour Association has been slow but sure, and as years passed on companies found that it was worth their while to join the Tea Districts Labour Association until to-day we see that it has got 93 per cent. of the companies in Assam. Therefore to say that it has the monopoly is, in my opinion, not correct; it is one of growth and not monopoly?—I have tried to explain that this growth is backed up by legal monopoly under the Act. I would say that if the monopoly were a free growth it should be allowed to grow, but I do not think it is.

F-3523. You agree that it is much easier for the Government to deal with one organization than dozens of organizations?—I agree.

Colonel Garbett: I do not think the word "monopoly" is the right word to use.

F-3524. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You say: "I am not criticizing the administration of the Tea Districts Labour Association but the system under which they work." What do you exactly mean by that?—They have done work very well. Under absolutely free conditions they might have attained the same position of predominance that they have at present.

F-3525. *Miss Power*: In your memorandum you deal with the possibility of using public employment agencies and you say "It would greatly cheapen the cost of securing labour and would at the same time be a help and a safeguard to the labourer." I take it that you would need *sardars* to bring the worker from the village to the exchange, would you not? Otherwise how would the worker in the village obtain a knowledge of the existence of these exchanges and the information to be obtained from them?—I think if exchanges were set up it would be the duty of Government to make it very widely known that such exchanges had been set up and that any one seeking employment could go there and get information as to the employment available.

F-3526. How many such agencies would be necessary? In your supplementary note you suggest that every registering centre should be constituted as an employment bureau?—That might be done.

F-3527. I take it there are a good many of them, are there not?—I would not start with a good many; I would start with a small number and see how they worked; if the experiment justified itself, then I would extend.

F-3528. The propaganda to get the existence of these bureaux known in the numerous villages would be a very expensive matter?—I do not think so.

F-3529. How do you suggest it could be done?—There is a Government *chowkidar* in every village; Government may require him to publish the fact. There are village *panchayats* and village headmen and this information can be published through them also without any expense.

F-3530. On whom would the expense of these bureaux fall, on the Central or Provincial Government, or the industry, or on a combination of all these?—I think, first of all, if there were registering centres for Assam under the system I propose, the cost would naturally be borne by the tea industry if they were working for the tea industry only; but if they were also constituted as employment bureaux and working on behalf of Government to contribute towards solving the problem of unemployment, then Government should bear a portion of the cost.

F-3531. A portion of the cost would be borne by the tea industry?—Yes, in view of the fact that they would be set up for tea garden recruitment.

F-3532. *The Chairman*: They might be recruiting for coal and oil?—Yes, coal and oil might also utilize them. I think it would be a very generous thing if Government bore the entire cost of such centres, but very much doubt if they would.

F-3533. *Mr. Cliff*: You mean the Assam Government, because it wants to develop its Province by colonization of its waste areas and so on?

Mr. Clow: Inter-provincial migration is a central subject and any work done by a local Government in that behalf is done as an agent of the Central Government. If the cost of such a centre should fall on any Government it should fall on the Central Government under the constitution as it at present stands.

The witness: It is not merely for the benefit of Assam but also for the benefit of the recruiting areas as it relieves surplus population and reduces the pressure on the soil.

F-3534. *Miss Power*: In your memorandum you quote the rule relating to the detention at the dépôts of women and minors for a period of three days. Then you suggest that the time should be extended to 10 days. We had a Government witness from Bihar and Orissa who told us that, where abuses existed in regard to recruitment, they were mainly in regard to women and minors. What is your experience?—I think it is quite correct to say that. I think there is another way which would avoid this detention. If the employers who recruit gave an undertaking to repatriate when called on to do so by the District Magistrate of the recruiting district, that undertaking might be accepted in a very large number of cases.

F-3535. Of course it would be better to discover the illegality before the recruit is sent up?—Yes, it would be.

F-3536. The Government of Bihar and Orissa agreed that there might be considerable use for a woman official in connection with recruitment of women and minors in those areas where recruitment is heaviest. Would you agree to that?—I do not think that a woman official could possibly put a stop to these abuses. I think the best means is registration. You then know where the people have gone and they can be got back if necessary.

F-3537. You do not think it is possible invariably to get the consent of the relations before a woman or minor is forwarded, allowing 10 days for this and for the relations to make a protest if there has been any illegality?—Do you suggest that in each case an enquiry should be made? It would then involve a tremendous amount of delay and expense. Probably the result would be that the recruit would get sick of all these delays and enquiries and never go to the agency again.

F-3538. What percentage of cases would come under that category?—Not more than 80 or 90 come to our notice out of about 40,000.

F-3539. You suspect there are more existing than actually come to notice?—Yes, there must be people who abscond or, elope and are not known of; no complaint is made.

F-3540. *Colonel Garbett*: When a complaint is made they are easily traceable?—Yes, easily traceable.

F-3541. *Miss Power*: You do not get many who arrive up here and then have to be repatriated?—No, not more than 80 cases are ordinarily reported.

F-3542. In your memorandum you deal with the medical examination of recruits at the source of recruitment. Would it not be better if this were not left optional but made compulsory?—I think so. Most companies do have medical examination at the source. But if a local agent sees a man who is obviously unfit for work on a garden he will not forward him. I think it may be cheaper to repatriate undesirable recruits who have been sent up than have a medical examination of all the recruits at the source.

F-3543. With regard to the sardar's commission has there been any attempt on the part of the Indian Tea Association to regulate that?—It is regulated to a certain extent.

F-3544. But it is very high?—It varies from Rs. 20 Rs. 50 or higher.

F-3545. In your memorandum you say: "On the other hand, the other form of competition for labour, i.e., increase of wages and the offer of better conditions, is restricted by the control exercised by the circle committees." Would you explain that?—If any garden wishes to raise its wages, I understand it has got to consult the circle committee before doing so.

F-3546. Lower down you say: "Till wages find their true level, there will not be a free flow of labour to the tea industry." Yet dealing with minimum wages the Assam Government memorandum says: "It must be remembered that in Assam the demand for labour exceeds the supply and where such a condition exists, wages generally will be comparatively high." I take it you would not agree with the Government view that the wages are high?—No.

F-3547. Your view is that if the wage level is raised and if certain restrictions are removed there will be a greater flow of labour?—I think that if the wage level is raised there would be a greater flow of labour.

F-3548. You also think that the wage level would rise if certain restrictions were removed?—I think so.

F-3549. Referring to the Assam Labour Board the Government of Assam say that "on such a Board labour has no real claim to be represented." Do you agree with that view?—I rather agree with that, because I consider it would be an unworkable system to have labour representatives controlling the local agents appointed by the employers. I consider that recruitment has nothing to do with the conditions of labour on the garden. Labour would certainly have a claim to be represented if there was any body constituted to control the conditions under which labour works on the gardens.

F-3550. *The Chairman*: If there was a Board of Health and Welfare in Assam that would be the place for the representatives of labour?—Yes, that would be the place for labour representatives. I do not think it is necessary for labour to be represented to control recruitment. The best form of control would be official control.

F-3551. Would not labour representation on such a Board tend to increase recruitment?—I do not think so; it might tend to the contrary.

F-3552. *Mr. Clow*: What is the actual work done by the Assam Labour Board?—Inspection of local agencies is the chief work with a view to ascertaining whether abuses exist.

F-3553. Putting it candidly, suppose the Board were to disappear what would be the practical effect?—The practical effect would be that supervision would be withdrawn and abuses might go on.

F-3554. In actual practice most of the cases that are taken up are brought to light by the local agents, that is by persons in the service of the Tea Districts Labour Association and not of the Board at all?—Yes.

F-3555. The Board's supervisors are engaged in supervising the work in theory of persons who are not in any way subordinate to it?—Yes.

F-3556. Would it not be feasible to start with a system of free recruiting to industries other than the tea industry in Assam?—The tea industry has as good a claim to free recruitment as any other industry in Assam. It would be unfair to the tea industry to single it out for control.

F-3557. Those who are qualified to speak for the tea industry say that some form of control is necessary. Would it be possible to start free recruiting for coolies who have had previous experience of Assam?—If you had free recruiting for one section or one industry it would be very difficult to control another section or another industry in Assam. I am in favour of free recruiting, but as the tea industry have asked for control and as the local Governments have asked for control I suggest there should be registration to prevent abuses.

F-3558. Am I right in saying that a number of years ago when there was a certain amount very badly controlled recruiting the cost of bringing a labourer to Assam was a good deal higher than it is even now?—That was before the passing of Act VIII of 1915. I have not much experience of that time.

F-3558a. The effect of the partial monopoly of the Tea Districts Labour Association has been on the whole to bring down the cost of recruiting rather than raise it?—The abolition of the *arkatti* recruiting has brought down the cost of bringing a labourer to Assam.

F-3559. The Board has mentioned in its last report that there were some places where plenty of recruits were anxious to go to Assam but were prevented

by money-lenders and those who had hold over them?—Yes, I do believe there is a good deal of interested opposition from money-lenders and zamindars and people to whose interest it is to keep the labour in the recruiting district itself.

F-3560. *The Chairman*: Does that apply to the 5 areas in the United Provinces where recruiting is closed?—I think so. I believe there is opposition there.

F-3561. You think there is a considerable number of potential recruits in those closed areas to whose advantage it would be to have an opening in Assam?—I believe so.

F-3562. *Sir Alexander Murray*: I notice that in more than one place you refer to the *sardari* system as a very good one and as a matter of fact a very safe method for the labourer?—I said it was so in theory.

F-3563. Do you not think that a *sardar* or anybody else who goes down from a garden will be a fairer recruiter than a professional recruiter or any other recruiter?—The professional recruiter is not necessarily an evil person. I dare say that the *sardars* would be equally mischievous if they were not controlled.

F-3564. In theory at least a *sardar* must be relatively better than a professional recruiter. Do you agree with that?—I would not say that.

F-3565. You would still allow a garden to recruit from any area it liked. You would not restrict the area of recruitment to particular places?—No.

F-3566. When you experiment with an employment agency which particular place will you select?—I have not thought over the matter. I should like to get more information.

F-3567. Will you start that in a difficult place or easy place?—An easy place.

F-3568. If you are going to give opportunities for propaganda, remove all the existing restrictions and start the experiment in an easy place, do you think that it would be fair to compare the results of an experiment like that with the results of the *sardari* system which has been put under so many restrictions?—I think that the tea industry should be very glad if these agencies are successful and can help them. I do not condemn the *sardari* system, but I want to remove the restrictions placed on recruitment.

F-3569. You refer to the breakdown of the *sardari* system. Is that on the question of the cost?—It has not produced the supply of labour which the tea gardens require although the industry commenced recruiting about 1863.

F-3570. I have looked at the Robertson Report of 1906. That says that in 20 years they recruited 931,000 labourers. The average from 1885 down to 1900 when restrictions were imposed under Act VI of 1901 was 52,000 a year. In 1901 for four years it dropped to 21,000 a year. Does not that show that the restrictions caused a drop in recruitment?—That is what I say.

F-3571. If really these restrictions stand in the way of recruitment who is responsible for the breakdown of the *sardari* system?—The restrictions together with the unduly high commissions and various other factors I have mentioned.

F-3572. Taking the 16 years 1905-06 to 1920-21 when the troubles took place and the next committee enquired into the matter there was an average annual recruitment of 66,000. So that in spite of all the restrictions the Association has so adapted itself to altered circumstances that it has raised recruitment from 21,000 to an average of 66,000 per year?—I think these figures are very largely affected by the figures of famine periods that come in. They depend very largely on scarcity, famine and other conditions besides these restrictions.

F-3573. In your memorandum you make a calculation regarding the number of *sardars* sent down to the recruiting districts. You say that out of a total of one million odd labourers on the books of the tea garden managers they sent down 41,000 odd *sardars* and that represents 4 per cent. sent down to recruit. But you send down only adults as *sardars*?—Yes.

F-3574. You give the average daily working strength (men and women) as 355,000 odd. Therefore roughly speaking, you send down 12 per cent. of the average daily working strength either on a holiday or recruiting?—Yes.

F-3575. How many of them are women, will it be 1 in 3 or 4?—I have no figures.

F-3576. Is not a great deal of the expense due to the long time taken to bring the people up? We met some people on a garden who had been 15 days on the way. They came from Jashpur one of the Ranchi districts. Why should they take 15 days?—I think they walked from Jashpur to Gumla and then from Gumla to Lohardaga. They probably took four days walking.

F-3577. Why should they be kept so long?—I cannot say. It is not under any orders of the Assam Labour Board.

F-3578. How long does it take a recruit from Madras to go to Ceylon?—There is a detention of 6 days in a quarantine camp. There are several collecting stations and one big dépôt. They pass through them very quickly.

F-3579. Do the railways give any concession to these people who move up and down so often?—I do not know. The Tea Districts Labour Association would know. I know that there was some talk about that.

F-3580. You arrive at certain costs in your memorandum. I think you have been unfair in the figures you have taken. You have deliberately taken out of the returns the very highest you can get. You make it even higher than the return makes it. You have taken the instance of a coolie coming from the Ganjam Agency to Lakhinipur district which is the farthest that any coolie travels?—That is where most of the coolies go.

F-3581. You have taken Ganjam Agency; that is not where most of the coolies come from?—Ganjam is about the central district.

F-3582. Take this Jashpur from where about 13,000 coolies came last year. The average advance given there is Rs. 13-7 per adult recruit. But you pick out the very highest in the list and take the advance paid as Rs. 51-12. Is that quite a fair comparison to make?—It does not apply to agencies where they get a large number of recruits per sardar.

F-3583. In supporting your case you wanted to pick out the most extreme case of the lot?—That is not the most extreme case. I could have possibly picked out more extreme cases.

F-3584. No, you could not have?—I certainly took out facts which support my case.

F-3585. You say that the oil fields get cheaper recruiting?—Yes, they pay nothing.

F-3586. We had Mr. McAllister, the General Manager of the Assam Oil Co., Ltd., in front of us and we asked him: "When a man came before you, did you ask him where he actually came from?" He said he did not ask any question but simply employed him. Is it fair to compare the oil fields and the tea gardens for recruiting purposes?—What do you suggest?

F-3587. I will let you draw the inference. You say that the total cost of recruitment in the coal-fields comes to Rs. 100 per head. As a matter of fact there can be no comparison between the oil fields and the coal-fields and the tea industry. Tea garden labour is agricultural.—I think there is a comparison. They should be compared.

F-3588. In your memorandum you say: "Any employer, or, on behalf of an employer, any association or firm duly authorized by general or special order of the Governor-General in Council for the purpose of this clause, may apply for a license as aforesaid, to be granted to a specified person." Under the existing position any employer can apply for a license?—Any individual employer can. That is the existing position.

F-3589. Why are they not allowed to recruit?—They are not allowed to recruit themselves; there must be a local agent in the recruiting district.

F-3590. Do you know of any case where individual employers have applied for a license and have had their application rejected?—I know of no such case.

F-3591. We inspected the Boloma Tea Garden and the manager told us that he had applied for a license, that it was passed by the Assam Labour Board and that it went no further. Why has it been hung up?—He and 8 other planters applied to have a local agent before I became Chairman in 1927. The Assam Labour Board asked them to give the names of the local agents whom they wanted to employ. There was some delay. After I joined the Board they gave the names of the men they wanted to employ as local agents. We recommended the case to the local Government. I do not know what happened afterwards. I believe the Assam Government consulted other local Governments.

F-3592. You have not followed up the case. Do you not think that the man has cause for grievance?—No, he has no cause for grievance against the Board. The Board only gives its opinion when asked for. It has made no delay. The Board's opinion was in favour of the application.

F-3593. Have you a list of the local agents here?—No, not here.

F-3594. Could you tell us from the list who this man is who signs for one of the agencies? (Pointing to the document obtained from the Boloma Tea Estate

regarding certain points to be noted by managers in sending *sardars* down for recruitment)—I will let you know by referring to the list. It might be the local agent at Cuttack, Dr. Gupta.

F-3595. In your memorandum you give us a list of the chief items which enter into the cost of recruitment. They are seven in number. How many of them still would be necessary if the system were changed?—I do not know whether item (i) would be necessary or not; it would depend on the nature of the system adopted. Items (ii) and (iii) would have to be incurred under any system. The bonus for labourers is optional with the employer. With regard to item (iv) if the local agents devoted themselves to recruiting work instead of registering and so forth they could do this job.

F-3596. Do you not think they should be supervised by somebody?—I do not think so. They would be the representatives of the employers and why should the employers put another man to supervise these men?

F-3597. You contemplate appointing local agents all over the place without any supervisors?—Yes, except the supervision involved in official repatriation of emigrants. With regard to item (v) some cess would have to be levied in order to provide the cost of registering officers. Item (vi) would have to continue but it might be cut down considerably. And so should item (vii).

F-3598. All these items would have to continue under any system?—Most of them. The Tea Association need not go through all this elaborate system of recruitment if recruits voluntarily enrolled themselves to come to Assam. I hope that this may happen and that a lot of people would roll up voluntarily and ask to be sent to Assam. Then you would have none of these expenses.

F-3599. You contemplate commissions to be paid?—Not if a person comes in voluntarily. No commission need be paid in that case.

F-3600. You expect men to come voluntarily?—I think they might come.

F-3601. Dealing with possible substitutes you say: "I would allow employers to select their recruiters from any class of persons, subject only to the conditions that the recruiter must be duly authorized by a certificate from the employer who appoints him, that he be a person of good character, that he be registered as a recruiter in the office of the official" and so on. We have met garden managers of all descriptions and come across *sardars* of all descriptions. If a man came to you with a certificate from a garden manager stating that he is a man of good character, you would immediately allow him to recruit?—Yes.

F-3602. What is the Immigration Fund to be composed of?—The Immigration Fund is simply my suggestion as to how recruitment costs could be reduced. No reduction can be effected without the co-operation of the tea industry and if the tea industry do not accept the proposal it cannot work. If they do not accept it, it is for them to suggest something else which will effect the desired results. They have proposed nothing else and I come forward with this proposal. It works in Ceylon and Malaya and I do not see why it should not be a success if the tea industry co-operated in its working.

F-3603. You say: "The aim of any new system of control which may be set up should be to place the tea industry, as nearly as circumstances permit, on a level with other industries which are uncontrolled in respect of their recruitment." But are not these restrictions directed against the tea industry?—My effort has been to reduce the control, not to increase it.

F-3604. You do not want to place the tea industry in the same position as any other industry?—As nearly as circumstances permit. The tea industry themselves say that they are not fit to be placed on the same level as other industries.

F-3605. I appreciate that. You say, "as nearly as circumstances permit." In your memorandum you say: "The Ceylon and the Malay systems provide a very detailed system of control, but in view of the clean record of the tea industry for the past fifteen years, I consider a lot, which is provided for by law in the Ceylon and Malay systems, may be left to the good faith of the industry." What do you actually mean by that?—I mean that I have omitted a great number of restrictions which find place in the Ceylon and Malay systems.

F-3606. You finish up by saying that "for the expenses incurred in recruitment prior to the registration of the labourer a fixed sum, to be determined in consultation with the tea industry, would be paid for each labourer recruited." Have you thought of what will be the likely amount?—Rupees 10 is the rate in Ceylon and I think that should be enough here.

F-3607. *Mr. Ahmed*: What is the main object of the Assam Labour Board?—To suppress abuses and ensure clean recruiting.

F-3608. If the planters have any difficulties can they be removed by the Labour Board or will they have to go to the Government of India?—What kind of difficulties? For instance they have a grievance against Act VI. The Labour Board cannot do anything in the matter. They have to go to the Government of India.

F-3609. They have asked for the abolition of your office?—Yes.

F-3610. Are you in favour of it?—I think it might be abolished.

F-3611. Will that be for the benefit of labour?—There must be some official control, if the Assam Labour Board is abolished.

F-3612. You do not want to abolish the *sardari* system altogether?—No.

F-3613. Have you told the Government of India that the present Board should be abolished?—No.

F-3614. I suppose the Government of India know that it will be for the benefit of labour if the present Board is abolished?—I do not know. The Indian Tea Association may have suggested its abolition to the Government of India.

F-3615. You want that the labour rules should be abolished and that there should be free labour?—I should be glad to see all restrictions removed.

F-3616. Suppose there is an employment agency and an employment bureau consisting of the representatives of labour and of employers. Would not that be a better system?—I have not thought about it. I am not certain whether it would be necessary to set up a bureau of that character.

F-3617. Why do the coolies prefer industrial occupation in factories? Is it because they get higher wages there?—I have not compared wages. I do believe they get higher wages in some industries. In coal mines they probably get higher wages. In Jamshedpur probably they get higher wages.

F-3618. *Mr. Cliff*: In your memorandum you refer to the grant of clothing and blankets. I was in a dépôt the other day and I noticed that in some cases blankets were given to men. There is no mention of clothing given to children. Is it a practice that the grant of clothing is all entered on a form?—I do not know.

F-3619. These forms are not official forms at all?—They are from the dépôt of the Tea Districts Labour Association. It is a matter for the supervision of the Tea Districts Labour Association.

F-3620. Do not the agencies come under your supervision?—Only for recruitment. The clothing and outfit are not prescribed by law.

F-3621. Is not the name "Assam Labour Board" a misnomer? Does it not convey the impression that the Assam Labour Board looks after the conditions of labour?—Yes, it is a misnomer. "Assam Recruitment Control Board" would be better.

F-3622. Apart from the supervision of local agents has the Assam Labour Board any power to improve the system of recruitment?—It cannot, because it is bound by law.

F-3623. Has the Board as at present constituted any policy in connection with recruitment at all?—No. It is only to supervise recruiting and check abuses.

F-3624. *Mr. Clow*: It is really an endeavour to get the industry to police itself?—Yes.

F-3625. *Mr. Cliff*: Would the Board itself have anything to do with the type of labour that were suitable for tea garden labour. Does that come within their province?—If recruitment were carried on in an area where the labourers were found to be unsuited for Assam the Board might recommend the local agent's license should not be renewed and thereby put an end to undesirable recruiting.

F-3626. To whom would they recommend?—To the District Magistrate of the district in which the recruiting was taking place.

F-3627. Could they similarly recommend that another area should be opened up?—They might bring it to the notice of the tea industry or the Tea Districts Labour Association but they could not issue orders on the subject.

F-3628. Would the Tea Districts Labour Association be able to make recommendations?—The Tea Districts Labour Association could apply for a local agent's license and start recruiting.

F-3630. Has it ever been shown that there is an insufficiency of suitable labour for tea gardens?—I think there is a sufficiency of labour in the recruiting districts.

F-3630. Has the tea industry been sending recruiters for the past 70 or 80 years now?—Yes.

F-3631. Do you know of any other industry in the same position as the tea industry which has been recruiting for such a long period and which has not yet got a satisfactory supply of labour?—No.

F-3632. Is not the difference between the system of recruiting adopted in Ceylon and the system of recruiting adopted here that the one has succeeded and the other has not?—It is noticeable that Ceylon is more successful. I have no personal experience of Ceylon. The Controller in his report says that Ceylon has as much labour as it wants, but I cannot say whether that is true or not.

F-3633. Is it true that a good deal of the labour recruited for the tea gardens is recruited during famine seasons?—During famine seasons there is a great increase in the number of recruits, but those recruits do not stay on the garden but go back again when the famine conditions have passed away.

F-3634. Is it the fact that whenever food is dear or whenever there is a famine or an apprehension with regard to the monsoon, the tea industry is able to get an influx of labour?—Yes.

F-3635. Would it be possible to abolish recruiters altogether?—I do not think the tea industry would get its labour if it abolished recruiters.

F-3636. If the Tea Districts Labour Association with its agencies could be the recruiting agency, and if it declared what were the conditions in the full light of day, and if the public of the country could be assured that there was protection and necessary regulation of the labourers, would there be an improvement in the situation, do you think?—Yes, I think so.

F-3637. Would it not be possible also to abolish the recruiters altogether under that system?—It might be possible in course of time, but it would take a considerable time before the free flow, which you have in mind, would be established. It would take some time before the labourers got into the habit of moving of their own accord. They are now being sent by recruiters, and that is the only system which has been in vogue. I do not think you could pass over to any other system at once.

F-3638. If you could not pass over to any other system to-morrow, what suggestion would you make as to how one could begin to pass over?—I have suggested that alongside the recruiting system there should be employment agencies opened whereby the terms and conditions would be made known, and whereby any labour which wished to move through these agencies could be sent to the employer.

F-3639. I take it that the main concern of the public of India is that the conditions of the people when they are on the estate should be such as ought to obtain in any well regulated employment?—Yes.

F-3640. Is there any objection to the Tea Association being able to make free and full use of any legitimate propaganda?—No.

F-3641. May I take it that in your opinion first of all the existing system should be done away with, that a new system of control should be brought into being, and that, alongside that, you would from your experience be prepared to recommend that there should be an experiment in certain districts on the other system?—Yes.

F-3642. I understand that part of your duty as Chairman of the Board is to supervise the local agents?—Yes.

F-3643. We came into possession, at one of the tea estates which we visited, of a note which was attached to one of the Tea Districts Labour Association printed forms. I cannot decipher the signature, but the agent describes himself as "local agent." This is the kind of thing which is stated in it. "Sardars who are not sent down under a state of affairs" (which are previously stated) "and who have been too long on the garden and have never recruited before are considered to be not well selected. Such Sardars can only be expected to be successful in famine stricken districts." Is that the kind of advice that one expects an agent to give to a tea planter?—If I understand that the local agent says that a sardar who has been on the garden for a long time is not a suitable recruiter, that is the view generally held.

F-3644. Then it says that such *sardars* can only be expected to be successful in famine stricken districts?—It depends on what he means by "successful." If he means securing a large number of recruits I think it is true; unless he resorts to *arkatis* to assist him, because he has lost his connection with the recruiting districts through lapse of time.

F-3645. *The Chairman*: Does it mean that in all probability his immediate circle of relatives has been exhausted, and therefore any recruiting he can do will be amongst people who are in extreme distress?—Yes.

F-3646. *Mr. Cliff*: What I am anxious to know is whether one would expect an agent to be giving advice to the effect that the *sardar* can only be expected to be successful in famine-stricken districts?—I think it is going too far to rule out altogether such a man as is referred to, but I think he is not a suitable kind of recruiter.

F-3647. The note goes on to say "Garden wives and children, specially of low castes, who are young, should not be considered enough security, even in cases of successful *sardars*, unless they have landed and other properties of some worth on the gardens and are in easy circumstances there"?—That advice would not be endorsed by any decent employer in the tea industry.

F-3648. The note further says: "Not more than one or two *sardars* belonging to the same village should be sent down unless there be scarcity of food." Is that the kind of advice that is given?—I do not think so. I am sure that is not authorized by the Tea Districts Labour Association.

F-3649. Taking the next paragraph of the note, is it recognized by the Assam Labour Board and the Tea Districts Labour Association that "it is always a system to send *sardars* before December and after May in season unless the abnormal conditions prevailing in the district warrant it"?—The Tea Districts Labour Association advise their constituents to send their *sardars* between November and May, as they have more chance of getting recruits then.

F-3650. *Colonel Garbett*: Is it not a fact that during June, July, August, September and October, the people are busy with their own crops?—Yes.

F-3651. *Mr. Cliff*: Is it to be taken that as far as the recruiting districts to which you go, are concerned, it is impossible to obtain labour in those months?—It is very difficult indeed to do so.

F-3652. Can it be taken that, taking India through, there is not suitable labour for the tea industry?—I think there is a sufficiency of suitable labour if you take India.

F-3653. If the Tea Districts Labour Association can go into new districts why are not those new districts tapped?—The Tea Districts Labour Association is prohibited from going into some of those districts.

F-3654. But they can go into the other districts. If there is an adequate supply of labour in India I cannot understand why the tea industry cannot get its supply of labour, if conditions are what the tea industry say they are?—I believe that higher pay would attract labour. There are other reasons why the tea industry cannot get all the labour it wants. It has Act VI to contend with. That hampers it very much. It cannot send men down to the recruiting districts in order to let it be known what the prospects are in Assam, whereas other industries may. Then they have the year 1921 to contend with, and the previous bad reputation of Assam; and there are various other handicaps.

F-3655. If as a general policy a higher standard wage was adopted it seems to me that there should be no difficulty about recruiting labour?—I agree that a higher wage standard would go a very long way towards solving the problem.

F-3656. Does it not come to this. The tea industry is seeking to recruit its labour on the present wage standard and on the present standard of life?—Yes.

F-3657. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: You admit that if higher wages were paid it would increase the flow of labour. Would it help matters if you had a Welfare Board in Assam and if the public knew that that Board was looking after the welfare of workers on the tea estates?—That would be a new idea to the labourers. The mere fact that there was a Welfare Board would not induce labourers to come to Assam; if the Welfare Board improved conditions in Assam the labourers would come if that became known.

F-3658. Suppose it were known that the workers could take their grievances before an impartial tribunal and get them adjusted, or, if they wanted higher wages, that they could place their case before an impartial body and get the matter settled one way or the other, and suppose that they knew thereby that they were not left completely at the sweet mercy of the manager, do you not

think that that would very largely solve the difficulty?—I think that might unsettle the labour force. Instead of giving the tea industry a more satisfactory labour force it might leave them worse off. So far as I know such a system is not working in any industry.

F-3659. If a regular system were introduced, whereby the workers had the right to go before an impartial tribunal and say "These are the reasons why we want higher wages: will you listen to our case," would that settle them more on the estate, or would that lead to an unsettling of the minds of the workers?—I think it would be dangerous. In the first place, I doubt if it would be possible to get a Board which would be competent to decide these matters, because conditions vary so very greatly from one garden to another. It would be very hard for any Board to give a just decision in all these disputes. The best safeguard for the labourer would be his freedom to go to the best market, and also the competition of employers for his labour.

F-3660. Would you agree that if freedom of movement is allowed it would be better for the worker as well as for recruitment. Similarly, if the impression, which is now in the mind of the public that roads on tea estates are not public property, were removed, would it not also help?—Yes.

F-3661. Again, if the land which is given out to workers by the tea garden managers had some fixity of tenure attached to it, that would also help to attract more labour, would it not?—I do not think so, because there is so little land, comparatively speaking, and most of it has already been taken up. Therefore new labourers would not be attracted by the very remote prospect of getting fixity of tenure on land which is already occupied.

F-3662. We have heard that there is on almost every tea plantation a fairly large amount of land still unoccupied?—I do not think that is so. All the rice land is already let out.

F-3663. Let me take the case of those who have already got land. Would it help to keep them there if they had fixity of tenure?—Yes.

F-3664. With regard to the question of repatriation, you think it would undoubtedly help recruitment if the worker knew that after a certain period, for reasons to be laid down and investigated by a board let us say, he had the right to be repatriated?—Yes. The mere fact that there was more frequent going and coming between Assam and the recruiting districts would always have a beneficial effect.

F-3665. *The Chairman*: Is not the present position this that repatriation at the garden expense can take place where the labourer is unsuitable to the garden work; there are two grounds, I think, on which the Magistrate can order repatriation?—Yes.

F-3666. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: You say in your memorandum that since 1920-21 onwards there has been an increase in the quantity of the advances paid. What is that due to?—I cannot say why they have given higher advances. Probably one reason is that everything is dearer and prices have risen and the value of money has fallen.

F-3667. Suppose the Assam Labour Board is abolished, what sort of control would you suggest?—I would suggest official registering officers with a controller at their head and the controller to be assisted by two or three assistants in the supervision of these registering centres.

F-3668. You would have them in the recruiting centres?—Yes.

F-3669. Would it be of any advantage in having dual registration, that is, both in the recruiting area as well as here in Assam?—I think that would make it very expensive; I doubt if it would be worth it.

F-3670. If the District Magistrate of the recruiting district only were to have the information about those who are licensed, how could that information be made available here?—If that were required it would be very easy to ask the garden managers to send in a list of every labourer who was imported into their estates. There would be no extra staff required for that purpose. It would be quite easy to ask the garden managers to send in a list in whatever form it is wanted.

F-3671. Would it be feasible to hand that information over to the Welfare Board if it is set up?—Yes.

(The witness withdrew.)

ASSAM.

Fifty-sixth Meeting.

SHILLONG.

Friday, 17th January, 1930.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (Chairman).

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| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | DIWAN CHAMAN LALL, M.L.A. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. | L.T.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S., <i>Medical Assessor.</i> |
| MR. JOHN CLIFF. | |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA | .. } Assistant Commissioners. |
| L.T.-COL. H. C. GARRETT, SUPERINTENDENT, | .. } |
| KANJIKOAH BUDLA BETA TEA CO., LTD. | .. } |
| MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN, <i>Lady Assessor.</i> | |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. | Joint Secretaries. |
| MR. A. DIBBIN | |

Mr. J. INSCH, M.L.C., Chairman, and Mr. T. C. CRAWFORD, Vice-Chairman, representatives of the Indian Tea Association, Calcutta.

F-3672. *The Chairman:* What is the constitution of your Indian Tea Association?—(Mr. Insch) The Association was formed in 1881; the objects and duty of the Association are to promote the common interests of all persons connected with the cultivation of tea. The area under cultivation in north-east India is 628,000 acres, of which the Indian Tea Association represents 530,000 acres, or 83·45 per cent.

F-3673. Are the headquarters of the Indian Tea Association in Calcutta or London?—The headquarters of the Indian Tea Association are in Calcutta; we also have a London Indian Tea Association.

F-3674. Where is the body which considers the general policy of the Association relating to matters affecting the industry?—We consult London on any big matters; ordinary matters are decided in Calcutta.

F-3675. Has London any overriding power?—No, it is simply consultation.

F-3676. Your Association is the body which has the power, covering 83 per cent. of the industry, to take decisions on matters of policy?—Yes. In any matter vital to the industry we would certainly consult London.

F-3677. What is your position *vis-a-vis* your constituent members?—We communicate regularly with them also; they discuss problems with us.

F-3678. Are your constituent members the individual tea estates or are they groups that come under one management?—They are both; agents and managers are eligible for election.

F-3679. How do they stand as subscribing members of your Association?—We all pay the same: annas 10 per acre under tea; that is the basis of our finance.

F-3680. Is the representation on a proportional basis in that respect?—Yes.

F-3681. I presume you have an Executive Committee?—Yes; nine firms are represented; they are elected by votes once a year.

F-3682. Does that Executive Committee sit from time to time in Calcutta?—Regularly fortnightly and more frequently if there are any important matters to discuss.

F-3683. And they discuss all matters relating to the welfare of the industry. —That is so.

F-3684. As to the amount of control in matters of policy, are your decisions executive decisions, or are they simply advice to your constituent members?—(Mr. Crawford) They are recommendations.

F-3685. You consider any matters affecting the welfare of the industry and all the persons engaged in it, and you work by means of advice to your constituent members?—Yes.

F-3686. But there is no agreement which enables you to impose decisions on your constituent members?—(Mr. Insch) We do not endeavour to impose our decisions; our recommendations are generally carried out.

F-3687. Is the Tea Districts Labour Association a body entirely under your control?—No, it is entirely separate from our control.

F-3688. Surely there must be some point of contact between you?—There is a main point of contact; we discuss important labour matters.

F-3689. But your Association does not in any way control the activities of the Tea Districts Labour Association?—No; they are two separate associations.

F-3690. And it is possible for a tea garden to be a member of the Tea Districts Labour Association and not a member of your Association?—Yes, and the other way also.

F-3691. You have told us that your Association includes both managing agents and individual managers of tea gardens?—Yes; it is really an association of producers.

F-3692. We understand that the methods of managing agents in connection with the managers of their tea estates vary in different cases; I am thinking for the moment of the method of remuneration of the managers of the tea estates?—Yes, there is no common policy; each agency house would arrange its own terms.

F-3693. For instance, one of the things in which we have been interested is the question of expenditure on welfare on the tea gardens, and it has appeared to us that in some cases the arrangements might have the effect that the manager of a tea garden wishing to spend money on what is generally called welfare for the benefit of the workers on the estate, would know that such expenditure would come out of his remuneration, and that would lead to a natural conflict in his mind as to how far he was justified in indulging in such expenditure. Am I to take it that that is a matter you leave entirely to the individual groups of agents and which you do not discuss as a matter of policy in your Association?—We do discuss amongst ourselves what different agencies are doing.

F-3694. And would you be in a position to make recommendations on a matter of that kind?—(Mr. Crawford) I think that would be rather a matter of policy for the directorate or the control of the companies concerned.

F-3695. Would you agree that the managers of estates ought not to be in a position where in regard to what in their opinion, and of course within reason, was necessary expenditure for the future benefit of the estate in the form of welfare activities, they should be penalized if they undertook such work?—(Mr. Insch) I have never known a manager to be penalized for putting forward anything to benefit his labour force.

F-3696. I am referring to the question as to whether expenditure of that kind ought to go to block account and not to be charged against revenue and therefore affect the manager's commission?—I do not see how we could charge a recurring expenditure to block account; we always have to differentiate between revenue and block. (Mr. Crawford) I take it you are referring to items of some importance and not to possibly Rs. 200 or Rs. 300. For instance,

expenditure on medicines is charged to estate expenditure, as are Malaria schemes, unless they are of a particularly expensive nature, because I think it may be contended that the manager indirectly derives benefit from the results of that expenditure by the resulting improved health conditions. I cannot, of course, speak for everyone, but so far as our own practice is concerned, we should charge a new hospital to block, and a certain percentage, more or less based on income-tax percentage, is charged as depreciation through the estate accounts; that would affect the manager to the extent of, say, 5 per cent. on the depreciation charge, which would be a very small amount; he is presumably deriving benefit from the improved health of his workers.

F-3697. But you cannot say that the practice you have just described is invariably followed?—In our agencies it is (but I cannot speak generally). (Mr. Insch) Our practice is slightly different. All medicines would be charged to revenue, a new hospital would be charged to block and nothing would be deducted from the manager's commission. If we replaced an existing hospital with a better one, we would charge the difference to block.

F-3698. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What proportion of the tea industry do your two agencies represent?—(Mr. Crawford) Speaking of India I should think 22·35 per cent.

F-3699. *The Chairman*: What actually is the practice on your estates as regards block expenditure and revenue expenditure generally?—(Mr. Insch) New coolie lines would be block. A new water-supply would be block. We have been digging tube-wells; that is a block outlay.

F-3700. What would happen in the case of a new school, for instance, costing Rs. 400?—We would leave that to the manager; we would put it to block if he thought he was losing in any way.

F-3701. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Have you any standing rule as to expenditure above or below a certain sum?—(Mr. Crawford) An expenditure below Rs. 1,000 is generally charged to revenue. We have a number of schools in our south India properties and they are all charged to block, the manager paying depreciation. It is a very small charge on the manager's commission. Schools costing Rs. 400 or Rs. 500 would be charged to revenue. (Mr. Insch) Yes, a small item would certainly be charged to revenue.

F-3702. *The Chairman*: Is this a matter which you discuss within your Association?—Not within our Association; we discuss that with our managers.

F-3703. Then your Association has no policy that you recommend to all your constituents on a matter of that kind?—No.

F-3704. You would agree that it is desirable that managers should not be put in the position that they themselves would suffer seriously financially because of their desire to progress in providing more amenities for the workers?—We always endeavour to encourage them in that respect; we would never discourage them.

F-3705. With regard to the policy of your Association on the matter of recruiting, it seems to be generally agreed that the industry needs more labour than it at present obtains?—Yes.

F-3706. And that it could make considerable progress, both in improved cultivation and in expansion of the industry, if more labour were available?—Yes.

F-3707. Therefore one of the chief matters always in front of your Association must be methods whereby the stream of labour to Assam in particular can be increased both in quality and quantity?—Yes.

F-3708. We have become aware in our visits to the recruiting areas that there is still lingering some prejudice against migrating to Assam. That may be partly, or perhaps mainly, due to the idea that Assam is a very distant place. I am speaking of what we think is in the minds of the villagers from whom you would hope to recruit. We have had a suggestion that a great deal of that prejudice might be removed in a single stroke, and thereby greatly increase the flow of would-be recruits, if there were a general agreement that after a reasonable period—let us say three years—of experience on the tea gardens, there should be a right of repatriation to those who do not desire to stay in Assam, the idea being that that might have the effect of so increasing the flow of would-be migrants that you might have more people applying at your depots than you needed, and would be able to make a more careful selection. We have found that that suggestion so far I think has received general favour.

Now we have the opportunity of putting it before your Association; do you think you as an Association would be in favour of a step of that kind?—If restrictions were lighter we would certainly favour it.

F-3709. I am, of course, assuming that many of the restrictions on propaganda, assisting and these things that have grown up out of the unhappy Act VI were done away with, and possibly also there might be a widening of the area of recruitment. Supposing those things accompanied such a proposal, you as an Association, I take it from what you have just said, would be prepared to agree to repatriation after a specified period at the expense of the gardens?—Yes.

F-3710. So that you would by that means ensure retaining no one on your estates who was discontented with the life; you would have then a body of workers who had freely made the decision after a reasonable experience that they liked the life and wished to stay?—Yes. (Mr. Crawford) I take it that that repatriation which we would concede would not be a general right to repatriation. I mean the labourer would have an opportunity at the end of the first three years to repatriation, but if he did not avail himself of that right at that time, he would forego that right. I wish to make the position clear, because after that period labour difficulties might arise, when, if there were not that stipulation, the whole labour force would be in a position to claim repatriation.

F-3711. Of course that has been present to our minds; I was only putting the proposition in a very broad sense. There are a good many questions as to methods which would require more detailed consideration. I see, of course, the point that you could not have at any one time the whole or any substantial body of your workers claiming on the instant such a right of repatriation?—That is what I mean.

F-3712. But, taken as a broad principle, from what you have said I take it you would be prepared to agree?—(Mr. Insch) We favour it, yes.

F-3713 As a part of the general proposition there have been suggestions as to basing it on working days instead of years; but it is a question for consideration as to whether the simpler the right the more easy it would be in administration; but I do not think we need go into that point of detail at the moment. Another suggestion has been present to our minds. The Assam Labour Board appears to be a body which suffers from misdescription; from its title it would appear to be a body concerned with the conditions and welfare of the labour force in Assam; as a matter of fact, it has nothing at all to do with that; it is really dealing with recruiting and not with conditions on the estates. We have seen with much interest and pleasure the experiments that have been made in recent years, particularly in the matter of health, medical arrangements, in some cases education, and other amenities of life on the gardens, but we are at the same time impressed with the great variation in matters of that kind between one estate and another. Do you think it would be an advantage to the industry as a whole if there were in Assam some body such as a Board of Health and Welfare, mainly concerned to bring up the more backward estates to the level of the better ones, and generally helping and advising the individual estates how to raise the standard of living and therefore the desire to earn more on the part of the workers in the gardens?—This matter has been taken up in regard to another district. We were very anxious to include all tea estates in that particular district and also the surrounding areas, because very often cholera and other diseases are brought in from the adjoining villages. We wanted to have the whole area controlled; it was felt to be not much good carrying out special work on particular estates unless a body also controlled the adjoining area.

F-3714. If there were a Board of Health and Welfare under which certain Government officials would be linked up with the managers of tea gardens and certain other representatives particularly concerned in the welfare, education and so on of the garden workers, that would be a body which would work in the direction you have just indicated?—Yes. I was talking of health only at the moment. You also bring in welfare and education?

F-3715. To some extent the two matters of health and welfare are allied?—We consider that to be so, yes.

F-3715a. You would not be opposed to a suggestion of that kind? The suggestion is it should be an Advisory Board, leaving executive action, where it was proper, to lie with Government; any question of issuing of orders would lie with Government on advice tendered by such a board?—I feel certain it

would be sympathetically considered if the whole area surrounding the estate were brought in. (Mr. Crawford) That was the reason that influenced this proposition in another district, it was the influx of cholera and other epidemics from the congested area surrounding certain tea areas, and it was thought that if this board were set up it would be some restriction of our troubles in that respect. That was in the Dooars. For political reasons the Government did not press it. Mr. Travers will give you all the particulars because he was identified with it.

F-3716. You tell us in your memorandum that for reasons of policy when Act XIII disappeared, the bonus was continued. Naturally you did not wish to withdraw the Rs. 12, or whatever it is, per annum from your workers; they might have misunderstood and resented such a withdrawal. But in that matter we have found in individual estates widely varying practice as to the manner of payment. In some cases there has been executed what is called a civil agreement on the receipt of the bonus. In others a simple receipt with a thumb print is taken. In a third class of cases it is paid without even a receipt. But we have found almost universally lingering in the mind of the individual worker the idea that the bonus carries with it an obligation—they think a legal obligation. The managers tell us if there is any obligation at all, it is merely a moral and honorable obligation to work for another year. Has that question ever been discussed as a matter of policy by your Association? Did you ever recommend the substitution of a civil agreement?—(Mr. Insch) Through the Association we did not recommend a civil agreement, no; we all recommended a continuation of the bonus to the worker.

F-3717. That was a distinct recommendation?—Not from the Association.

F-3718. But from agents to their gardens?—Yes. The coolie would have considered it a hardship if he had not been allowed the money. (Mr. Crawford) I take it there is no objection legally to the civil agreement. I do not wish it to be understood that I support it, but the objection is to the interference that remains in the mind of the coolie that he is bound by contract.

F-3719. You have told us that your Association looks in general to all matters affecting the welfare of all persons engaged in the industry; I thought perhaps you would have had some discussions on that question and would have arrived at a common policy?—I think we have had some discussions in the past, but I do not remember our recommending any common policy. Speaking for the agency with which I am connected, we consulted managers as to whether the bonus should continue or not, the consensus of opinion was in favour of that and we agreed to it, but I do not think we laid down any common policy in regard to how it was to be done. I think our understanding has been that it is merely an entry in the garden books.

F-3720. Then as an Association you certainly have not even recommended a policy which involved a civil agreement or a thumb print being taken?—I do not recollect it.

F-3721. With regard to education I take it from what we have seen that there is no common policy advised by your Association to your individual members. Is that left entirely to the managers of individual gardens?—(Mr. Insch) It is left to the managers, after discussion with the managing agents.

F-3722. Can we take it as the general view of your Association that endeavours should be made to progress along the lines of education for children?—Endeavours have been made, but it has been very difficult to impress on the coolie that he will gain by education.

F-3723. Has your Association ever considered evolving a type of education which would recommend itself to the children and be particularly suitable to the future life of these children on the garden estates?—I do not know that the Association has done that.

F-3724. Would you be prepared to consider such a proposal as an Association, or must you leave all such matters to your individual constituents?—Yes, a matter of that sort at present would be left to individual constituents; but if there was to be general education and it was made compulsory, of course we would take it up then.

F-3725. But your industry is such a great industry and such an important part of Assam; would you not be prepared to take a lead rather than wait for the rest of the community in an important matter of that kind?—May I leave the Association out of consideration for a moment and see what we have done individually. This matter was discussed and it was thought when we were budgeting that the first matter was to see to the health of the coolies; if we

could educate them in hygiene, then education was more likely to follow. Although we have schools on each garden, provide school houses and pay the school master, we still thought that hygiene should have first attention.

F-3726. Would not hygiene itself be best attained through the children rather than through the adults?—I am thinking of a practical type of education which would include hygiene and the facts of a cultivator's life. I am looking to your great industry possibly to evolve a type of education peculiarly suited on the practical side to the life of these children who will be your future workers?—Yes, we also look at it in that light.

F-3727. You have told us quite clearly I think in your memorandum your views about Act VI; you give us an interesting summary as to the principal defects of the existing Act; then you tell us of three principal directions in which increased freedom should be given: propaganda and assistance to *sardars* in their work, assistance to voluntary immigrants, arranging for short-term labourers or providing recruiting nuclei to employers who have no connections. In all those respects you submit to us that great assistance would be given to you in increasing the flow of migrants and enabling you to make a better selection of those who offer themselves for work in Assam. Am I to take it you would like to see Act VI swept away?—I have a précis on that subject and perhaps I may submit it. (Same handed in.) (Mr. Crawford) This details the defects of the Act and also makes suggestions for an alternative to the present system; it is to supplement what we have said.

F-3728. I want to arrive at a much greater simplicity and directness.—That is what we desire.

F-3729. *Sir Alexander Murray*: One of the difficulties we find in connection with *sardari* recruiting arises when you open up a new area and have no *sardars* to send there; what is your suggestion in connection with that?—It has been suggested that there should be public employment agencies.—If this freer system of recruiting is given us, I think it will fill the position of public employment agencies to ourselves: in other words, it would give us the connections which we cannot obtain under the present system of recruiting under Act VI.

F-3730. In Assam do you find people wandering about from garden to garden seeking employment or anything of that sort?—No. (Mr. Insch) I have never heard of an able-bodied worker being out of employment in Assam and I have never met one.

F-3731. Comparisons have been made between the wages paid on the gardens and in Jorhat, Silchar and other towns, and it seems to us that higher wages are paid in the towns than are paid, especially from a cash point of view, in the gardens. Have you any views on that?—They are employing casual labour, whereas we endeavour to settle the people. (Mr. Crawford) In the gardens houses are provided and they have advantages in the gardens which they do not have in the towns.

F-3732. The principal items of expenditure in connection with your recruiting, apart from travelling and administration expenses, consist in the advances that are given to the *sardars* in the districts and in the commissions that are given to the *sardars* after they come to Assam. Who regulates advances given to *sardars* and on what basis are they paid?—The advances to the *sardars* were regulated by a special Committee; that Committee came to a decision with regard to the first amounts to be advanced to *sardars* in the recruiting areas, and we have kept to that. There are special cases in which people have tried to get past that, but that has been over-ruled by the Tea Districts Labour Association. As regards second and third advances which may be Rs. 10 or possibly Rs. 5, the local agent has discretion on the basis of his recruiting results.

F-3733. Does the Assam Labour Board control that in any way?—It does not. They may bring the matter to our notice if, they consider the local agent is going past this, but I would not say they control it. If our agreement in regard to advances was being exceeded, they would bring it to our notice.

F-3734. What is the agreement?—I have not brought it, but I think the maximum is Rs. 45. I can give you that information possibly this afternoon.

F-3735. Does Mr. King's system contemplate reducing these amounts which are being paid in the shape of advances?—Presumably from his figures he must be contemplating some very radical reduction in recruiting expenditure.

F-3736. Could you of your own volition reduce these advances to *sardars*, because they come to very substantial amounts?—We did have it under consideration I think possibly two years ago but nothing was definitely decided. In fact it

was raised by some people who wanted to exceed the amount. We, the Tea Districts Labour Association, considered the question and we refused to entertain it. I cannot remember whether it was referred to the Tea Association also.

F-3737. Is there an understanding as to the amount of commission paid to the *sardar* when he brings coolies up?—No, there is not. Speaking for the agency with which I am connected, we have an understanding; our limit I think is Rs. 20 per head or Rs. 45 for a married couple, and no man is allowed to exceed that without special sanction. I think there is one garden where we pay Rs. 5 more, but that was owing to the manager misinterpreting our instructions and we did not like to ask him to go back on his word to the coolie. Other concerns pay a considerable commission I understand; they recover their advances in some cases, and part of their advances in other cases, from commission. I have had no experience of that; I am just speaking from conversations.

F-3738. If you had an emigration fund out of which the expenses would be paid to the *sardars*, the advances and commissions being regulated, is there any reason why this cost should not be very materially reduced?—I do not think there is any stipulation as to advances in Malaya, and advances are permissible in Ceylon up to Rs. 10 or Rs. 15, speaking from my information. Our advances are high, but it must be borne in mind that the coolie under our system may have a considerable distance to go, whereas in Ceylon he is usually near.

F-3739. We have had criticisms of the Assam Labour Board on the ground that it consists almost entirely of representatives of tea garden managing agents?—I think that constitution is more or less to be expected, because the Board was inaugurated at the express desire of the industry to stop the abuses which were prevailing then in connection with *arkatti* recruitment. The managers are also represented on the Board. There are two practical managers on the Executive Committee.

F-3740. How often does that Committee meet?—It is at the Chairman's option. I think the General Committee meets twice a year; any special matters are dealt with by circular, and if any difference of opinion arises as the result of circulation I presume the Chairman would call a special meeting. The Executive Committee generally meets just after the General Committee. The Chairman circulates papers to the Executive Committee as necessary.

F-3741. The view of your Association, not speaking of the Tea Districts Labour Association, is that there is no longer any necessity for the Assam Labour Board—(Mr. Insch) Yes, that it has outlived its usefulness.

F-3742. There has been criticism on the ground that somebody has been responsible for refusing applications from tea gardens for separate recruiting agencies, and it has been suggested to us that that has been due to the influence on the Assam Labour Board of members of the Indian Tea Association who do not want serious competition with the Tea Districts Labour Association. The Doom Dooma case in particular was referred to?—(Mr. Crawford) It so happens that the Doom Dooma case is within my personal knowledge. I think the Indian Tea Association considered that application, because we were anxious not to have anybody breaking away from the recruiting organization and forcing up rates. If my recollection is correct, it was also referred to the Government of Assam who disapproved of granting to the Doom Dooma Company the right of having another local agency.

F-3743. Mr. *Clow*: When you refer to forcing up rates, do you mean forcing up rates of wages?—No, there was no suggestion of that; I am talking of advances. That is within our knowledge in the Dooars. Before we had an agreement in the Dooars we were operating against one another in particular areas, and it was very remarkable the way in which advances increased in the short period of 18 months even.

F-3744. Sir *Alexander Murray*: People who are not members of the Tea Districts Labour Association might decide to form an association with a view to recruiting without the intervention of the Tea Districts Labour Association. Have you refused any applications of that kind?—The only one we have discountenanced was that of the Doom Dooma Company. There was one put by the Government of Bihar and Orissa of a local agent to represent a certain group of Indian gardens.

F-3745. That is a local agent which is another matter.—You are referring to a separate organization. There was one case which came before the Board to which I think Mr. King referred yesterday. We have no objection to that.

F-3746. Are there any other applications which you have refused?—Not within my recollection.

F-3747. If we could put cases to you you could express your opinion as to them. There is a difference, is there not, between a man who is a member of Tea Districts Labour Association wanting to break away, and you pointing out the advantages to him of not breaking away, and the case of an outside agency not under your control at all wanting to be set up?—Yes.

F-3748. There are only two cases within your knowledge: the Doom Dooma Company and Boloma?—Not Boloma. I could not say what gardens applied for this, but as far as I remember there were six gardens.

F-3749. I suppose you look upon the Assam Labour Board as a child of your own?—We do.

F-3750. Constituted for the express purpose of helping you to put down abuses?—Yes.

F-3751. And it has done that. You say the Assam Labour Board has outlived its usefulness; what is to take its place?—I think we can control ourselves in ourselves. One system is the withdrawal of Section 3 notifications, and recruiting under 92, in which case the Act is still operative, so that if we cannot combine to work to the satisfaction of the Government, the notifications under Section 3 can still be reintroduced. The other is on the lines of our draft bill submitted to the Government of India, which provides for such control as the Government of India or the local Governments may think necessary.

F-3752. Do you suggest if you were left free entirely that Government ought not to re-utilize Section 3 unless they found there were abuses?—I take it the policy of the Government of India as already declared is ultimately the free movement of labour, and that in so far as we are concerned there is an intermediate period during which legislation may apply and in which we shall be on trial. If we come through that trial satisfactorily, then the question of entire freedom can be considered.

F-3753. Would you not need some supervising agency of some description on behalf of Government?—Under the new Act of course it remains with Government to say what control they wish to have.

F-3754. *The Chairman*: Your policy is that you would like to take sole responsibility for a period of, say, 7 or 10 years, to prove at the end of that period that all restrictions can be abolished?—I think so.

F-3755. Therefore you would be on your honour or on your metal to see that nothing is wrong, in order to prove that after what you call an intermediate period there is no need to treat Assam differently from any other part of the country?—That is so.

F-3756. *Sir Alexander Murray*: The statement which you have just handed in does not make it clear what would be the effect if you removed the operation of Section 3?—We should have entire freedom; we could recruit in any way we liked. There would be restrictions in regard to the forwarding.

F-3757. Section 163 would still remain in force?—It would.

F-3758. What would you say is the average working time of your labour force in the garden?—Our information is that the limit of working is round about 6 hours.

F-3759. I am not speaking of the individual worker but of the numbers employed; you have over a million souls in your gardens?—I think possibly the efficiency would be round about 60 per cent.; that is to say, 60 per cent. of the labour force turn out to work.

F-3760. The report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1921-22 at page 32 shows that of the total number of labourers on the books—not the souls on the garden—over a period of years the proportion that turned out to work was 77 per cent. of the men, 74 per cent. of the women and 72 per cent. of the children. That is in the months of March and September. The reports on immigrant labour in Assam for the past year show the corresponding figures: 76 per cent. of the men, 73 per cent. of the women and 69 per cent. of the children. What means, active or passive, are employed to get the workers to come out to work?—(Mr. Insch) Tactful handling.

F-3761. Have you any views to express as to why the workers are not turning out as well now as they used to?

The Chairman: There is not much difference in the figures. We were told on the gardens that one factor was the increase of khet land.

F-3762. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You consider that increased earnings result in a lowering of efficiency?

The Chairman: Do you not really mean "effectiveness" rather than "efficiency"?—Yes. That answer was given after discussing the matter with the tea managers, and that is the impression we got from them.

F-3763. *Mr. Cliff*: One *sardar* clearly demonstrated to us his method of getting them to work; his method was the use of a cane. I do not know whether you agree with him or not?—(Mr. Crawford) No.

F-3764. *Colonel Garbett*: Is it not a fact that the mentality of the labourer is such that he only wishes to work for a sufficient time to get a sufficient wage to provide for his food for that day, that he does not look to the future and saving money is not in his programme at all?—(Mr. Insch) He is contented with a simple life.

F-3765. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Does that mean that the members of the Indian Tea Association claim to be experts in psychology?

Sir Alexander Murray: I should think the successful manager is.

F-3766. A Government Resolution followed on the 1921-22 report in which it was suggested that the District Sub-Committee should recommend what they considered to be a decent monthly or daily rate of wage. What have you done following on that Resolution?—(Mr. Crawford) I was Chairman then. We convened a special meeting of our Association at Calcutta to discuss the Resolution and the terms of the report with more particular reference to this question of wages. It had never been the practice before for the District Sub-Committees to be directly interested in wages though they may have consulted together to some extent. They had never any powers because these powers were more or less taken up by directors and proprietors. At that time, speaking for my own agency, we could not increase wages without reference to the Board of Directors at home. That was the case with regard to sterling companies, while rupee companies had to refer to the Board of Directors in Calcutta. We passed a resolution that the matter should be referred to the District Sub-Committees. The London Association agreed with the suggestion, and following on that the Tea Association in Calcutta referred the matter to the branches in Assam and Surma Valleys who put it before the District Sub-Committees. Following on that reference there were some adjustments here and there, and, previous to that, some action had been taken in many places with regard to readjustment of wages. In view of the express desire of the Government of Assam that they should be left free, no suggestion was made from the Indian Tea Association, Calcutta, in regard to the matter at all; we merely put the position before the branches for the necessary report from the Sub-Committees.

F-3767. The Resolution also said: "The Government of Assam are of opinion that the standard wages for the standard task should, apart from *ticca* earnings, be sufficient to provide a labourer of average capacity and industry with wholesome food, sufficient clothes and a little money over." Have you ever followed that up?—As I have already said, we left the matter entirely to the District Sub-Committees. They reduced the task and in certain cases they increased the wages.

F-3768. When visiting the tea gardens we found women were able to finish the task, without *ticca* work, in 3 hours. Have you ever indicated to your people that instead of working 3 hours they should work 6 or 7 hours?—As an Association we have not; as individuals we leave our managers fairly full powers on questions of that kind. The minimum wage has been continued in the form of *hazira*.

F-3769. But would it not facilitate recruiting if your recruiters told the people that they could earn annas 12 or 14 for 6 hours work?

Diwan Chaman Lall: But can they do it if they are doing heavy hoeing?—Speaking of the agency with which I am connected, there has been a tendency for our cultivation rates to increase. (Mr. Insch) We pay more for the production of tea than we were paying some years ago.

F-3770. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Although you are getting more per bush than you used to get?—That is so.

F-3771. *Mr. Ahmed*: I understand you desire to remove the restrictions on recruitment?—(Mr. Crawford) There are two proposals to give the industry greater freedom; one is to work under Act VI; the other is to work under new legislation. The first proposal would give us complete freedom in regard to recruiting operations, with the possibility that if undesirable features were introduced the Government of India might intervene and again apply the restrictions of Act VI.

F-3772. But you are in favour of recruitment without any restrictions?—Yes, except with regard to forwarding.

F-3773. I take it you are in favour of the abolition of the *sardari* system of recruitment?—No.

F-3774. I do not understand why not, in view of the difficulties and expense of that system. For instance, the State of Bastar do not permit recruiting?—The reason why recruiting was prohibited in Bastar State is that recruiting was so effective there that the officials stopped recruiting because of the tremendous drain from their area.

F-3775. Do you agree with Mr. King that a popular method of recruitment through public agency in addition to the *sardari* system is required?—Yes.

F-3776. I understand that under the *sardari* system each recruit costs you no less than Rs. 150?—It is very difficult to calculate the cost of recruitment per head. There are numerous methods of making the calculation; for instance, the figure is increased if you take into consideration in your calculation the ineffective *sardars*.

F-3777. We have evidence that at least one-third of the *sardars* who go to the recruiting areas do not return to Assam. Is that so?—Yes.

F-3778. That being so, why do you allow so many of your workers to return to the recruiting areas as *sardars* when you have no guarantee that they will bring any recruits or even return themselves?—I think possibly that question could be better answered by the managers who are on the spot, but, speaking from an agency point of view, we have never discouraged our managers from sending down a certain percentage of their labourers in order to keep in touch with the recruiting areas. It is true that many of those who apply for licenses as *sardars* return to their own country, make no attempt to get recruits but merely return to their original agricultural occupations.

F-3779. How do you realize the money you have advanced to those who do not return?—We do not realize the money.

F-3780. So that in the long run the members of your Association are losers?—It is a philanthropic institution.

F-3781. Are you in favour of public employment agencies?—No. I do not think public agencies are necessary under the scheme which we have formulated. (Mr. Insch) We are, of course, prepared to consider any scheme of that sort.

F-3782. You have told the Chairman you are in favour of a scheme by which recruits would have a right to be repatriated at the end of a period such as three years?—Yes, we favour considering it.

F-3783. A reasonable time might be 18 months, 2 years or 3 years?—The time would have to be arranged.

F-3784. As a broad matter of principle, you are prepared to agree that it is a good thing that no restrictions should be placed upon repatriation?—Yes. That is the same as the last matter you referred to.

F-3785. You take short-term recruits for 6 months or a year?—Yes.

F-3786. And you pay for the cost of their repatriation?—Yes, we pay their fares both ways. We employ short-term recruits in certain cases.

F-3787. We have made enquiries in tea gardens and we have found that the coolie thinks that when he receives the bonus of Rs. 12 under agreement he is bound to work in the garden for 12 months and cannot go away.—I have also enquired and I have not found the same impression. They may use the word *gurmit* but they certainly attach a different meaning to it.

F-3788. Is your Association in favour of a policy of removing this false impression from the minds of the coolies?—I do not admit that such an impression exists in the minds of the coolies.

F-3789. Does your Association know that the letters addressed to coolies living in the lines are not delivered to them in the lines themselves, but the coolies have to go to the post office to take delivery of them?—That would not happen with regard to unstamped letters.

F-3790. Mr. Cliff: Mr. Insch, you said that the object of your Association was to promote the common interests of all concerned in the tea industry particularly that of the cultivators?—Yes.

F-3791. Can that by any stretch of imagination be termed to include the common interest of tea garden workers?—The object of the Association is to

"promote the common interests of all persons concerned in the cultivation of tea in India."

The Chairman: In terms it does cover the welfare of the workers.

F-3792. *Mr. Cliff*: Has your Association as an Association taken a survey of the labour problem in the tea industry at all?—The Association has discussed the reports issued by the different Commissions.

F-3793. Is it fair to say that your Association as an Association has from time to time discussed matters that are forced upon their attention?—These particular reports referred to have been forced upon our attention.

F-3794. Can you fairly say that you have visualized the labour problem and taken a proper survey of it?—It is left to the managing agents.

F-3795. Is it true to say that in facing this problem of labour you have no declared policy?—(Mr. Crawford) I do not quite understand what you mean. The principal problem is that of recruitment of labour to which the Association has given considerable attention. Are you referring to welfare of labour?

F-3796. Has your Association ever made an estimate of the man power that is required at the present moment to staff the tea estates with their present area under cultivation?—We aim at having $1\frac{1}{2}$ coolies an acre.

F-3797. You mean actual workers?—A resident force of $1\frac{1}{2}$ coolies an acre. We take the children as half.

F-3798. Does your Association as an Association in dealing with the labour problem continue to take the child labour power in its estimates and provide for their labour?—(Mr. Insch) The Association does not say that.

F-3799. Who says that?—That is the calculation of the managers.

F-3800. Is it part of your policy to employ children or not? Or has it simply grown up with the managing agents and the tea garden managers?—It is the custom of the people and we have endeavoured as far as possible not to upset those customs.

F-3801. You have been in considerable difficulty to attract a satisfactory supply of labour. Has your Association as an Association dealt with the question of wage standards and conditions of work?—(Mr. Crawford) The Association has not done that. That is a matter entirely at the discretion of the companies and the employers.

F-3802. With regard to recruiting you are asking that all restrictions shall be removed and that in any enactment that shall be brought forward there shall be power for the responsible minister to act executively if there is any abuse?—Under the new Act we have that power retained.

F-3803. That is a kind of supervision?—Supervision is provided for in the Act, but the nature of it was never considered. The Minister would reintroduce the notifications under section 3.

F-3804. Otherwise you desire to be perfectly free in regard to recruitment?—As free as possible.

F-3805. Is it your policy always to attract settlers?—Yes.

F-3806. How far have you succeeded in attracting settlers?—(Mr. Insch) Taking into consideration the development of the province and the more intensive cultivation of the gardens, we have more settlers now than we had some 15 years ago.

F-3807. What percentage would you say that represents for the tea industry in Assam?—It has been estimated roughly between 70 to 90 per cent.

F-3808. If you take 90 per cent., then there is no labour problem?—But they want more labour.

F-3809. *The Chairman*: Ninety per cent. of the existing force are permanent settlers?—Yes.

F-3810. *Mr. Cliff*: What is the average duration of the labour force?—I have had an estimate put at 10 years.—I could not say whether it is accurate or not.

F-3811. Has your Association attempted to make an estimate?—No.

F-3812. *The Chairman*: I suppose it varies immensely on the different gardens?—Yes, it does.

F-3813. *Mr. Cliff*: If you could give us an idea about the average duration of the labour force that would help us?—Yes.

F-3814. *The Chairman*: Would it meet your point if we get the average loss per year?—We were told at one place that it was 10 per cent. There again I take it, it varies immensely from one garden to another?—Some estates do not recruit at all; they have a settled population. But estates which have reached the saturation point are few.

F-3815. Would it be wrong if I took it that the annual loss varied from 10 per cent. to as much as 50 per cent. on individual gardens?—I do not know of a case of 50 per cent. I would put it from nothing to 20 per cent.

F-3816. *Mr. Cliff*: With regard to recruitment in Assam itself, you have some fixed labour rules governing the movement of labour. Would you be in favour of establishing an agency even under your own supervision within Assam itself through whom alone gardens should employ labour found in Assam?—It is a new point of view to me. I would have to think it over.

Colonel Garbett: It would be rather a hardship on labour in this way. A worker may desire to transfer himself from one garden to another in which he has got his relations. If the other garden is not in the same agency as the first garden, there would be a difficulty.

F-3817. *Mr. Cliff*: It is a matter of transfer. If there are flaws in the scheme, they may be remedied. The labour rules are now weighted in favour of the employer. Labour ought to be free to move and not be liable to be enticed by false promises. On the other hand, the employers must be protected from losing their labour. If the conditions of employment can be clearly stated to a labourer by an agency of this character through whom alone employers should employ labour and at which place all the labour will be registered, then there will be a safeguard for the industry and a safeguard for the labourer?—(Mr. Crawford) That is worthy of consideration. The labour rules are under revision, and in revising them we are going to leave the labour entirely free and direct our attention mainly against enticement.

F-3818. With regard to the lines in which the labourers live, is there any legitimate or sound reason why they should not be a public place?—(Mr. Insch) I do not know whether the coolies themselves would desire this to be done. When we have a line situated near a bazaar, the better type of coolies prefer to go to another line which gives them some privacy.

F-3819. At the moment you are speaking for the Association?—I am speaking for the coolie resident. They generally do not wish to be disturbed by living near the bazaar. They come from the country districts and they want privacy.

F-3820. That is a point of view with regard to the coolies that I must take note of. From the point of view of the Association, is there any legitimate or sound reason why the lines in which there is a population of just over a million should not be made public?—Then you would have to make the whole estate public in that case. The property is a private property. There are generally public roads through the property.

F-3821. You have got a population of just over a million. Is there any sound and legitimate reason why those people should not live in a public place?—It is private property. We pay rent for it. I do not see how we can make it public property.

F-3822. Suppose the Government were to enact, subject to proper compensation, that where these people live is a public place. From the point of view of the Association, is there any sound or legitimate reason why that should not be done?—You mean applying the Land Acquisition Act and taking over the whole of our lines?—I cannot see why we should make it public if it is private now.

F-3823. At the moment I do not see why a million people should be compelled, by certain circumstances probably, to reside in private lines. That is a system that has grown up. It was once prevalent in the southern states of America. Is there any sound or legitimate reason that you can urge against their being made public?—I would like to put it the other way. They are not compelled to live on private lines.

F-3824. Suppose you are not compelling. Take it as a fact that they are living there?—They are free to move.

F-3825. Never mind the question of my having access to them as a well-disposed person. If a proposal was made that these places should be made public, is there any reason that you can urge against it?—We consider this is a question for the people and the managers concerned.

F-3826. Would you consider this in the light of the whole community of India?—(Mr. Crawford) I do not think any such law would exclusively apply to the Assam tea industry. It is quite a common practice in India for workers in mills and mines and so on to live on the private lines of their employers.

F-3827. There are many things in India pretty deeply entrenched and well established which a great many people want to alter. What I ask is: Is there any legitimate or sound reason that you can urge against a proposal of that kind?—The only thing we can say is that there is nothing to object to a well-disposed person having access to the lines. We have to consider people who are not well disposed. (Mr. Insch) Everyone wants a little privacy. I myself want a little bit of land to live on and be private.

F-3828. In another case you say there is not much difference between a villager and a tea garden worker with regard to the standard of education?—(Mr. Crawford) It is not a question for the Association. It is a matter concerning the proprietors. The Association might make a recommendation about it. But they cannot commit the gardens.

F-3829. Could they not consult their constituents and put up a considered reply as regards their policy in the matter of education?—I shall pass on to another point. There are members of the Commission who have visited the tea estates and several managers who have travelled with them, who have realized that there are a number of people still working on the gardens who believe that they are bound; and apparently no steps were taken in dealing with the tea garden labourers to notify them with regard to the changes in their legal status. If a proposal was put up for the legal status of the tea garden labourer to be made as clear to him as it is to the people in this room, would you have any objection to this being done?—We prefer that it should be done through the managers who know them.

F-3830. Would you object to a person accompanying the manager in order that the public may be perfectly satisfied that the tea garden labourer knows his rights and privileges?—(Mr. Insch) It is a surprise to me that he does not know his rights and privileges. I was under the impression that the worker did know that he was free. (Mr. Crawford) I take it that the person who accompanies the manager would be an official of Government. There is always the possibility of unsettling the labour force as happened in Ceylon when the *tundu* system was withdrawn.

F-3831. I see your difficulty, but the thing that is paramount is that the tea garden labourer knows his status?—(Mr. Insch) My view is that he knows it.

F-3832. I have put this question to several garden managers and they believe they would have trouble if the labourers had some knowledge of their freedom. Let me go on. Have you any objection to the tea garden labourers being able to combine?—There is nothing to prevent them doing it.

F-3833. There is a very great bar as I see it at the moment, and that is their illiteracy. Have you any objection to people who want to secure combination amongst the tea garden labourers taking legitimate steps to bring about that combination?—I should rather see education dealt with first.

F-3834. In some cases in the world, education has come as a result of such combination and it might be so here. You have got a combination here on your own side; what about a combination on the other side?—I appreciate that.

F-3835. It seems to me that they require assistance in order that they may obtain the combination to which they are entitled. Would the Association have any objection in the way of such combination being brought about?—(Mr. Crawford) I should like to know the suggested combination.

F-3836. What I am concerned at the moment is whether the tea garden labourer shall as a result of that unity be able to put himself on something like equal terms with the Indian Tea Association to wit if you will. Will you tell us later the views of your Association?—(Mr. Insch) It is difficult. It does not matter if they object to the labour force combining. The labour force would combine if they wish to. That is the only reply that the Association could give. (Mr. Crawford) We do not object to any development within the garden labour itself. The question is about the outward assistance that you want to introduce. That is where we are suspicious.

F-3837. If you boil it down, it means this: Here is a representative trade union movement in India, a body which is recognized and consulted by the Government. These are the most likely people to take up this question of

organization and assistance?—(Mr. Insch) You mean the Trade Union Congress. (Mr. Crawford) We had a representative of the All-India Trade Union Congress to whom we afforded special privileges. He misused them and naturally we are cautious.

F-3838. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: I would like to be clear in regard to the proposal which the Indian Tea Association is making for the revision of this Act. Is it the Association's suggestion to leave section 3 as it is?—(Mr. Crawford) Yes.

F-3839. You want to leave section 3 as it is without the notification, and work it with section 163. Is that the idea?—Yes.

F-3840. *The Chairman*: Is it a fact that your suggestion of what I might describe as "living on the corpse of Act VI" has been ruled out of court by the Government Legal Department?—Certain points were over-ruled by Government.

F-3841. But you have got round those points?—We have.

F-3842. And you have an amended "corpse" to live on?—Yes.

F-3843. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Section 3 substantively refers to notifications?—Yes.

F-3844. If you are going to do away with those notifications, what is the value of section 3?—There is no value.

F-3845. You want section 92?—Yes.

F-3846. Section 92 is also governed by section 3?—It is subject to the provisions of section 3. There would be no notifications under section 3.

F-3847. Section 3 gives the power of issuing notifications?—That is so.

F-3848. You want that to remain?—The power will remain, but the notifications will be withdrawn.

F-3849. The power remains of issuing notifications?—Yes.

F-3850. Do you not think that in tinkering with this particular Act you may possibly get into a worse mess? Is your object to have a new Act whereby freedom is left to you to recruit, and the power is left in the hands of the Local Government to issue such notifications as they choose in regard to the conditions of those recruited, the manner in which they are to be brought to the tea estates, and the provisions to be made for them during the course of their journey to the tea estates?—I might explain, with regard to tinkering with the "corpse" that we could go through an intermediate period of, say, five years, and if during that time everything went satisfactorily, presumably the Government would allow us entire freedom. On the other hand, if there was any indication that the tea industry was not giving a straight deal in the matter, the Government would always have behind them the power of notifications under section 3.

F-3851. Your object is to leave the Local Government free to issue notifications at such times as they choose, but leaving you complete freedom to recruit in any manner that you choose?—Yes. There would be an agreement similar to what there is in the Dooars in regard to the freedom of recruitment amongst ourselves.

F-3852. But being governed by section 163 in regard to the forwarding?—Yes.

F-3853. There is only one difficulty that presents itself to me. All this legislation came into being because of the abuses that had arisen in regard to the *arkatti* system. What control or check do you leave in the hands of the Local Government to prevent such abuses?—There is nothing in these proposals to suggest that the Assam Labour Board should be done away with.

F-3854. Suppose the Assam Labour Board were to be done away with?—There is no check beyond that.

F-3855. Is it your suggestion that you should have some sort of check?—No. The Local Government can keep in touch with developments. We will give them such information as they desire in regard to our operations.

F-3856. The only power which you want to leave in the hands of the Government is power in connection with forwarding?—Yes.

F-3857. Would you not leave any power in the hands of the Local Government to check any abuses in recruiting, if such abuses came to the notice of the Local Government?—The power of the Government would entirely be on

the basis of the re-introduction of section 3, notifications, which we do not desire.

F-3868. *The Chairman*: You do leave in the hands of the Local Government, under your proposals, the power to withdraw a licence from either a *sardar* or a recruiter, do you not?—No. There would be entire freedom under the first scheme.

F-3869. Then your additional recruiting agents would not be subject to having their licences withdrawn by the local authorities?—No. I think it would be better to discuss these legal points with Mr. Milligan this afternoon.

F-3860. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: I am not worrying about legal points. I want to get at the system you contemplate. Supposing all restrictions were withdrawn and all power of the Local Government to check abuses in recruiting was withdrawn?—The power is not withdrawn. There is still section 3 under which they can re-issue notifications.

F-3861. I am afraid we are getting into a little confusion. The only power which section 3 gives is the issue of notifications in consonance with the provisions of this Act, which you want done away with. Once you accept the Chairman's point, namely, that it is a skeleton which is left, there are no provisions in regard to which any notifications can be issued?—That is so.

Diwan Chaman Lall: So that it is a position which is contradictory. You give the power to the Local Government to issue notifications in consonance with the provisions of the Act, and yet you say that those provisions have to be done away with, thereby robbing the Local Government of any power to issue notifications.

Sir Alexander Murray: The notifications issued under section 3 are of two kinds—one which deals with the area in which recruiting may or may not be carried on, and the other which deals with the type of recruiters in particular areas.

Diwan Chaman Lall: The wording is "Otherwise than in accordance with such of the provisions of this Act as may be specified in the notifications."

Sir Alexander Murray: These notifications all deal with areas or the personnel of the recruiters.

Diwan Chaman Lall: That may be the position, but the fact is that it must be in consonance with the actual provisions in the Act. They cannot issue notifications except in consonance with the provisions of the Act.

F-3862. *The Chairman*: Would it not be better to have an Act which the ordinary man could understand?—I must admit that it is a controversial question. I have put our position before the Commission.

The Chairman: I understand your position, but at the same time it would be possible to have an Act in which the period was limited to 5 or 10 years.

F-3863. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: If that suggestion is accepted, would you be agreeable to there being some power whereby the conditions of employment and the wages in Assam could be regulated?—I take it your point is that if the Chairman's suggestion is acceptable to us, would we accept your proposition that there should be provision for a wage board. I should not think so. If such a wage board were applied to industries generally in India, we could not take exception, but I do not think the Assam tea industry should be singled out specially for that.

F-3864. You are singling out the Assam tea industry for the purpose of recruitment—a condition which does not apply to other industries; and since you are singling out that industry in that particular manner, what objections would you have to setting up a wage board?—There are practical objections which I have not dealt with. There are various differences within the estates themselves. You are also isolating Assam on the point of the wage board. Assam has got to compete with the Dooars, South India, and with other places. I do not see why we should be singled out for the introduction of an innovation in the form of a wage board.

F-3865. How would the existence of a wage board isolate Assam, any more than Assam is isolated from the rest of India at present?—The existence of a wage board would make a difference between Assam and other tea-producing areas.

F-3866. On the contrary, would it not make the position of labour on the tea estates more attractive?—No, I do not think so. The industry has already committed itself to repatriation. Do you expect it to commit itself further than that?

F-3867. *The Chairman*: You think that repatriation would be the real safeguard against any unfair dealing with the labour force?—I think so, ultimately; but there is no doubt that if a garden is unpopular with labour, labour will not remain on it.

F-3868. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Suppose a case where the workers want an increase in wages. They have no trade union. They are dealing with a very highly organized body, the Indian Tea Association and the managers representing it. Do you not think the balance is very heavily weighted in favour of the employers as against the workers, and that some protection ought to be given to the workers?—I do not agree with you.

F-3869. In a particular case the workers on an estate wanted an increase in wages. Action was taken against their leaders?—(*Mr. Insch*) I take it they had broken the law.

F-3870. Action was taken under section 107 under which executive action can be taken against anybody—yourself and myself included—who is breaking any section of the law, if it is held that there is an apprehension in the mind of the particular Magistrate that a breach of the peace is likely to be indulged in?—(*Mr. Crawford*) That is entirely within the power of the Magistrate.

F-3871. Would it not be better to provide some channel whereby such differences could be settled both in the interests of the industry and in the interests of the workers?—Are you not overlooking the fact that we have to give attractions on the gardens in order to encourage labour to come. If those attractions are not sufficient, under this repatriation scheme they can return to their homes or move elsewhere. Furthermore it has been suggested by Mr. Cliff that it should be announced by "beat of drum" that they are free to move anywhere. Do you not think it is asking a little too much to press your suggestion of a wage board?

F-3872. Why is it asking too much? Mr. Cliff reminds me that you just now said that you would be agreeable to an All-India wage board?—I think we are conceding quite enough as an industry.

F-3873. Suppose the workers feel that the wage they are getting is not satisfactory or that you are making deductions (a grave matter referred to by the 1922 Enquiry Committee) which you are not justified in making?—In cases like that they have always recourse to the managers, and my personal opinion is that the managers are a very fair minded lot.

F-3874. Can you tell me what particular increase in wages there has been on the unit system since 1922?—(*Mr. Insch*) We have to go back to the cost of production again which we know has been increased.

F-3875. Have you any figures to show whether, on the unit system, there has been any increase in the rate since 1922, and if so, how much?—I have not brought any comparative figures.

F-3876. Can you get them?—We could send to the different gardens, but we could only pick out a few estates. You would get a much truer account by getting the figures for yourself on your way round.

F-3877. The 1922 Enquiry Committee report says that the rate was increased in certain gardens from Rs. 6 to Rs. 7 for a man, and from Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 for a woman. Is that the average monthly rate fixed for minimum work (*hazira*) at the present moment?—I rather expected the Commission would get that information on the gardens.

F-3878. Do you not think, as an Association representing employers who employ nearly one million workers, that it is part of your duty to keep in touch with the correct wage statistics, and the fluctuations in the wages paid year by year?—You are now confusing the employers with the Indian Tea Association, because the Association is not an employer of labour. So far as my own firm is concerned, we obtain every month from Assam statistics of the average wages on each garden. We also get statistics of the earnings of the 15 best men and the 15 best women, with the names given, and those statistics are abstracted and sent home to the Directors for information. On the other hand we are bound by the Government of Assam's resolutions to leave the question of wages to District Sub-Committees to arrange.

F-3879. District Sub-Committees of the Tea Association?—Of the Assam branch of the Indian Tea Association.

F-3880. Does your Association at headquarters get these reports from the districts?—No, that is entirely a matter for the agencies.

F-3881. So that all you are concerned with is the bonus rule, rule No. 1. All you are concerned with is that if one particular garden wishes to pay the workers in the district higher wages than are paid by other gardens, you lay down a prohibitory rule?—(Mr. Insch) you are referring now to the original articles of Association. They are inoperative now.

F-3882. Have you a rule to that effect now?—(Mr. Crawford) The rule is still there.

F-3883. Is it your policy in practice?—(Mr. Insch) No, it is not. (Mr. Crawford) I have just proved to you that it is not. I have just shown you that we have, in this particular matter, referred the question to District Sub-Committees in accordance with the recommendation of the 1922 enquiry. If we had stood by that particular rule, we should not have done so.

F-3884. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Apart from these rules there are other rules, and that is what regulates enticement?—Yes.

F-3885. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Is there a similar provision under which a manager is prevented from engaging workers from another garden by offering higher wages?

Sir Alexander Murray: No.

F-3886. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Is that the practice or not?—Our practice is to discourage the enticement of labour.

F-3887. That is to say, the rule remains in practice?—The labour rules remain; and I consider it a business proposition.

F-3888. The fact remains that a manager is prohibited from recruiting a worker from another garden?—He is not prohibited, provided he pays the charges as defined in the rule.

F-3889. *The Chairman*: Is there any agreement or rule within your Association or your Branches or your sub-committees to standardize remuneration?—There is no such rule.

F-3890. On the other hand you have told us that, as far as the sub-committees are concerned, they do regulate by agreement?—That is so.

F-3891. There is no force of law or power of compulsion, but as a practical matter you do notify your local sub-committees to attempt uniformity within their area. Is that correct?—That is correct.

The Chairman: There is, through the sub-committees, in particular areas, an endeavour made to standardize wages.

F-3892. *Rev. Saikia*: Is there any attempt to recruit labourers from amongst the Assamese?—(Mr. Insch) Assamese labour is occasionally used for clearing land. I understand that such labour will not settle on the tea estates. (Mr. Crawford) The Assamese are not readily available for agricultural purposes. There is a system, through the Tea Districts Labour Association of recruiting Cacharies for seasonal work only in the cold weather.

F-3893. Many coolies come out of the gardens and settle in outlying villages near the gardens. Is any attempt made to employ those people in the gardens?—(Mr. Insch) Yes. They get temporary employment. We are always willing to give them employment whenever they come for it. (Mr. Crawford) The difficulty about that class of labour is that it is only available in non-harvest or non-sowing periods.

F-3894. *The Chairman*: But you do employ it as far as it is willing to come?—Yes.

F-3895. *Rev. Saikia*: Would it not make for better recruiting if the labourers knew that provision was going to be made for them in their old age?—(Mr. Insch) It would be an inducement. There is at present no provident fund for the ordinary worker. We have such a fund for the higher staff, and it is being gradually extended.

F-3896. Many of the coolies when they get old, go out of the gardens and earn their living by begging. If other coolies see that state of things, do you not think it will hinder recruitment?—Can you give us any instances of coolies from gardens begging? Managers always safeguard against that sort of thing by giving allowances. (Mr. Crawford) There is a provision made called "subsistence allowance" to meet these particular cases.

F-3897. I can give you many instances?—(Mr. Insch) Will you give us the names of the gardens?

F-3898. I am quite willing to furnish the names of the coolies and of the gardens if you want them?—We do. The Association would welcome that information in order to make enquiries.

F-3899. *The Chairman*: Rev. Saikia will send you the information direct. We may take it that it is in your view the exception, and an exception which ought not to exist?—It ought not to exist. (*Mr. Crawford*) I know from our accounts that money is provided for that particular purpose.

F-3900. *Rev. Saikia*: How many schools on each garden would be necessary in order to provide education for the children on the garden?—(*Mr. Insch*) You are a Missionary and perhaps you will make a suggestion.

F-3901. I would suggest that there should be two schools on each garden, one for the boys and one for the girls?—At present we only have one school on one garden.

F-3902. There must be many gardens in Assam which are not represented by the Tea Association. What are they doing towards being represented here?—There are 17 per cent. not in the Indian Association. They could send a memorandum if they wanted to.

F-3903. *The Chairman*: Is your Association open to receive them if they wish to come in?—Yes, they can apply for membership.

F-3904. *Colonel Garbett*: Mr. Chaman Lall said that you stated that the industry would be agreeable to a wage board provided one was set up for all India. What do you mean by "all India"?—(*Mr. Crawford*) I did not quite catch Mr. Chaman Lall's question, but I take it he took up my previous statement that we would not object to a wage board if such were applied to all industries in India. I should like to amplify that. We have to consider our position with regard to agricultural labour. We are coming into competition with them. We are more concerned with the wages of agricultural labour with which we have to compete than with the wages of industrial labour.

F-3905. Do you have provident funds throughout all your Companies?—(*Mr. Insch*) Yes. I cannot answer for the Indian Tea Association, but all big agency houses have provident funds.

F-3906. For the Indian staff as well?—Yes.

F-3907. What is the limit?—(*Mr. Crawford*) Rs. 25 a month is the minimum. We are very gratified at the response to our provident fund. Ninety per cent. of those eligible for membership have applied. There is no compulsion at all.

F-3908. They receive interest at 4 or 5 per cent.?—Yes. (*Mr. Insch*) They subscribe one anna in the rupee with us.

F-3909. Does the tea industry pay any income-tax to the Government?—(*Mr. Crawford*) On forty per cent. of the profits.

F-3910. It used to be 25, did it not?—Yes.

F-3911. Why was it increased?—It was due to the action of the Government of India.

F-3912. *The Chairman*: I understand that you are taxed by income-tax more heavily than an ordinary farmer?—(*Mr. Insch*) The agriculturist is not taxed in India.

F-3913. Is there a special provision for tea gardens?—Yes.

F-3914. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: There was a remission on the tea duty which benefited the industry, was there not?—The duty was a temporary war measure.

F-3915. That remission benefited the industry to the extent of about six lakhs, did it not?—There was never any benefit. When the duty was remitted the proportion of profits taxable was increased from 25 to 40 per cent. We are also maintaining the Tea Cess Organization.

F-3916. *Miss Power*: I wanted to revert, if I might, to the question of education. A number of managers of tea gardens have given as a reason for their objecting to the entry of outside influences, such, for instance, as trade union organizers, to the coolie lines, the fact that the coolie is too uneducated as yet to receive influences of that kind. That naturally raises the question as to what has been the educational policy of the Indian Tea Association to prepare their big labour force for influences which must inevitably break in upon them very shortly, since it is not possible to keep developments in the outside world indefinitely from the coolie lines. If you admit that your workers have been protected

in the sense referred to by these managers, will you tell us what you people as trustees of this big labour force have done to prepare them for these influences?—
(Mr. Inach) The tea garden worker is more superstitious than the person in the west.

F-3917. We are prepared to accept that the average coolie is superstitious because he is an uneducated person?—He needs education and the industry as a whole is very sympathetic towards education.

F-3918. But what has your association, as an association, done in that respect?—It is not for the association to deal with it but for those who have to pay for schools and teaching to deal with the question.

F-3919. You feel you have a responsibility for housing and health and matters of that kind but no responsibility for education?—We all feel our responsibility for education. The question was discussed very fully not by the association but by the employers. It was thought that, in the first place, attention should be paid to the improvement of health and hygiene and when this is done improvement of education could be attended to. As a matter of fact, we are making gradual progress in the matter of education.

F-3920. Take the question of adult education. The Assam Government report says quite frankly that there is no industry—it is not a question of the tea industry alone, but of all industries—in the province that is maintaining any school for adult education. Has your association ever considered employing some skilled person who would go into the question of how to educate the adult coolie by modern methods such as the cinematograph?—No.

F-3921. I suppose you know that there are film companies which are now engaged exclusively upon getting out educational films?—Yes; we are pleased to learn that.

F-3922. I was recently hearing of the very excellent work that had been done by one manager who happens to be an enthusiast in this question of the use of the bioscope, and it struck me that it might be quite possible for your association to initiate a travelling library of such films for the use of your members which would be a very valuable work in the education of adult coolies throughout Assam. I wonder whether it had occurred to your association to investigate all the new movements that are taking place in the realm of education for the benefit of the illiterate adult?—The association will gladly consider the suggestion. (Mr. Crawford) Some years ago when I was the Chairman of the Tea Association, we organized a cinema tour all over the tea districts with a view to interest labour and our action then resulted in a considerable number of cinema shows being shown at different places. Our managers had specific instructions to arrange for cinema shows on their estates, whenever it was possible, and charge the expense to the estate. In regard to educational films, I have not seen them here yet. I should think that the proposal is worth considering. In regard to schooling, I think you referred to Assam particularly. I think that the Dooars is in a more advanced position in regard to schools than Assam; that is my understanding of the position. We have encouraged it in every possible way in the Dooars. All the managers have discretion to start schools.

F-3923. Education and particularly adult education is a very technical subject which is more properly the province of a specialist. You cannot expect the manager of a tea garden, who is primarily a business man, also to be an educational expert, knowing how to get hold of the type of machinery which would be the best medium for educating coolies of the kind that you employ in the tea industry. Would it not be a valuable thing if your association, which I take it is a reasonably prosperous one, were to consider employing an expert to advise your different companies and gather together for them the available material of this kind with a view to a concerted campaign of adult education?—I certainly think it would be considered, but we require a proposition to be put before us. We, in Calcutta, are not experts either in that particular sphere.

F-3924. The reason why I particularly emphasize this matter is this: At Christmas, I watched the first bioscope film that had ever been shown to a collection of over a thousand Mugs. The programme itself is little worth detailing with the exception of one item which dealt with steam ploughs. These people, who up to that time had been comparatively apathetic, gave one tremendous shout of excitement when they saw the film dealing with steam ploughs. The film was a comparatively old one. There are better steam ploughs manufactured now. But the immediate gripping of the attention of these thousand primitive people by this film was an example of what could be done if you could give, for instance, suitable shows twice a week on your tea gardens. You could collect together a travelling library of films and pass them round to the members of your

association. This could very easily be done if you had an expert who kept himself in touch with the film companies in England, America and elsewhere that are now producing educational films for people in all stages of development. For instance, you could improve the technical skill of your workers by showing a film on the cultivation of tea such as I understand one manager did with a great measure of success on his estate. It is merely a suggestion and I wondered whether it had occurred to any of you?—We are following it in the State of Travancore, where we have a cinema house of our own. We have made arrangements with cinema firms both in Madras and in Bombay for the supply of films. These are meeting with a good reception. I think three or four performances a week are given. But these films are not all educational films.

F-3925. Take now the question of the children. I understand from some managers that one of the difficulties now is that the children having a considerable earning capacity, are not allowed by their parents to avail themselves of such facilities as may exist. If you had education through the eye by films for the grown-ups and also included them in the children's programme, and at the same time made it clear that only after so many hours' education would a child be allowed to do so many hours work, would you not find that much of the prejudice of parents and children against education would die down?—(Mr. Insch): Yes.

F-3926. Would there be any likelihood of recruiting of coolies being easier if some term other than "coolie" were used to denote the tea garden worker? I take it that your worker is a skilled and not an unskilled person?—You mean the term "coolie" connotes an unskilled worker?

F-3927. Yes, and moreover is there not a certain amount of prejudice against the use of that term?—Not amongst the coolies themselves, as far as I know.

F-3928. Are you sure that that is so? Is it possible for any body of persons so designated to be dissociated entirely from the prejudice which exists in connection with that word?

Lieutenant-Colonel Garbett: I think there is a certain amount of prejudice. For instance, if you address a coolie as sardar he feels proud and throws out his chest.

F-3929. Miss Power: Do you feel that the industry might gain by giving its trained workers some recognition of their skill by calling them by some term which conveys a higher status than that implied by the expression "coolie"?—(Mr. Crawford) That is a new idea.

Colonel Garbett: I think they would appreciate it.

F-3930. The Chairman: On that point we were distinctly informed that one reason, perhaps the main reason, why the Assamese do not freely offer themselves for work in the garden when they need employment was because they regarded themselves as being higher in status than a coolie and that if some other name such as the tea garden labourer were universally used to describe the worker in a tea garden, that might remove the prejudice of the Assamese, and you might thereby do two good things—increase your own supply of labour and increase the avenues of appointment open to the Assamese villagers in the neighbourhood who, I understand, are in some cases much worse off than the worker on the tea garden. That is only an additional point to the point raised by Miss Power. It does seem to me—and I have it in my notes also—well-worth considering by your association that you should completely eliminate the term "coolie" from your literature and from ordinary use, if you can, throughout the tea gardens. Possibly it is a step that would cost you nothing?—No. The same thing would, of course, apply to the Assam Labour Board.

F-3931. Miss Power: What percentage of the coolies on the gardens of your association are women and children?—I have the figures of sex proportion. In 1928-29, 77.4 women against 100 men in the Assam Valley and 99.4 women against 100 men in the Surma Valley.

F-3932. That includes children as well?—Yes.

F-3933. You have no statistics to show the percentage of women and children?—I can get it for you later on.

F-3934. Would it be fairly accurate to say that two-thirds of your labour force consists of women and children?—I could not say that. I can easily find it out for you.

F-3935. It does not matter about the exact figures, but in view of the large number of women and children who are concerned in this industry, I wondered whether it had ever occurred to the Indian Tea Association that it might be valuable to have a woman official associated with it?—(Mr. Insch): You mean a

woman who could deal with the enforcement of laws in connection with health and hygiene?

F-3936. I think she would probably attend to that also, but at the moment I was not thinking of a woman official employed by Government for the enforcement of laws, but rather of a woman worker of your business association. I agree that there is a great necessity for a woman official; that we have already discussed with the official witnesses. Would you be prepared to consider that other point?—We shall have to put it before the committee, but I am not quite sure whether it is a point that should be considered by the association as such.

F-3937. Take an instance of the value of a woman's view point which I have raised with other witnesses. I have been struck by the very great care taken by the garden management of orphan children where an epidemic has removed both parents, but I find that it has never once occurred to the management to ascertain whether any relations of those orphan children exist in the recruiting areas from which their parents came who might desire to claim those children after the death of their parents and bring them up. The gardens retain those children taking every care of them as potential labour force but they are never returned to the bosom of the family?—Really they are adopted; if not adopted they are brought up.

F-3938. They become tea garden coolies?—Normally, yes.

F-3939. I feel that it should be open to their families to have them returned to their relations as we should do in the case of any relation of ours. Do you not think that the woman's point of view might usefully be associated with the garden management by this means?—We shall consider the proposal.

F-3940. Mr. Chamani Lall, when dealing with the question of a minimum wage, raised the matter of making the tea garden labour attractive to potential recruits. Do you not think, if such things as maternity benefits and minimum wage had a legal basis so that the *sardar* could definitely state, for instance, that not less than so much wage could be earned by a reasonably diligent coolie and that such and such facilities were legally obtainable by every woman in case of child-birth, that you would increase the attractiveness of tea garden labour?—We are not in favour of making it legal.

F-3941. For instance, we understand that the coal mines at Margherita have no difficulty in recruitment, one of the reasons stated being that they have a guaranteed minimum. It is not a legal minimum but the Company is able to say to a worker "you cannot earn less than so much". It is true that it is a higher wage than is earned in the tea garden, but the attraction probably in part is that the workers know that they cannot earn less than so much?—(Mr. Crawford) The coal mines practically employ what we call casual or temporary labour. In our case it is only since the last three years that we have started recruiting short-term labour for Assam on any appreciable scale, but our case is different from that of the coal mines.

F-3942. Yes, but taking the situation as a whole, do you not think that a guaranteed minimum wage would form an attraction to your workers?—I do not think so. A tremendous lot depends on the *sardar* and his personal knowledge of the gardens. I do not think there is any necessity for legislation, say, in regard to maternity benefits because we ourselves are now giving very liberal benefits.

F-3943. Do I understand that as an association you are against the fixing of a legal minimum wage?—(Mr. Insch): We consider that one of the attractions of the tea garden, particularly with the unit system, has been that the coolie can work for a short spell, say, for two hours if he wished to and spend the rest of the time in attending to his own work.

F-3944. A minimum wage would not preclude that. There seems to be a confusion in the minds of Assam employers between the length of time for which a man is required to work and the question of a minimum wage. All that a minimum wage law would do, if it were passed, would be to require a tea garden to pay such a piece-rate as would yield the agreed minimum hourly wage to a coolie. That piece-rate would vary according to the occupation that he was engaged upon, the season of the year and so forth, but it would do no more than make it incumbent upon the garden management so to fix its piece-rates as to yield to an ordinarily diligent coolie not less than so much an hour?—We are doing that now.

F-3945. If most of the members of your association are already doing it, why do you as a body object to the fixation of a minimum rate which would bring the worst gardens up to the level of the others?—(Mr. Crawford) Your suggestion is to introduce a machinery to see that this minimum wage is complied with.

F-3946. The general principle behind a minimum wage is that it should be fixed where there are no arrangements existing for the effective regulation of wages by collective agreement or otherwise. I presume you would admit that there is no possibility of collective agreement as between tea garden coolies and a body of managing agents such as your association? You would agree that there is no possibility of collective bargaining as between even the garden coolies and their garden managers?—I thought you were referring to the collective bargaining as between the Tea Association and the garden coolies and not as between the managers and the coolies. The Tea Association is not principally concerned in the matter of wages; that has been left to the sub-committee to put up recommendations, or in other words to the managers; so any bargaining will be as between the coolies and the managers.

F-3947. What I am asking is whether you as an association consider that there is any real possibility of collective bargaining between even your managers and the tea garden coolies in their present state of education?—I think so.

F-3948. *Mrs. Rahman*: In your memorandum you refer to the Indian assistants being frequently placed in charge of outlying divisions of an estate. May I know the percentage that you employ?—(*Mr. Insch*) If you want the percentage for the association as a whole, I am afraid I cannot give it now. I can only tell you personally that we have two Indian managers on our property. (*Mr. Crawford*) We have also two Indian managers on our estates.

F-3949. What will be the difference in pay between the Indian assistants and European assistants occupying the same position?—(*Mr. Insch*) It depends on their experience. These men that I refer to are paid about the same as European assistants with a year or two years' experience.

F-3950. Are they paid the same salary?—Not in all cases. If the Indian manager is a beginner in the line he is started on about Rs. 250 a month. (*Mr. Crawford*) We also pay our men commission.

F-3951. That is the minimum that he draws?—(*Mr. Insch*) Yes; he also draws his commission.

F-3952. With regard to garden doctors you say that estates are gradually being staffed with qualified men with the L.M.F. degree or its equivalent. May I know what this degree represents?—I cannot say, but these are the men that we are advised to engage. Our difficulty has been that we cannot dismiss the men who have been in service for a long time, but as vacancies occur we fill them by qualified men. You will admit that it is most unfair to dismiss people who have served for many years.

F-3953. *Mr. Clow*: You have suggested, practically that the operation of section 3 of Act VI should be suspended for a number of years?—(*Mr. Crawford*) Yes. I do not want to enter into a technical discussion with you, but I think section 92 and rules under section 163 will be a sufficient safeguard in the matter of recruitment and that all the notifications under section 3 may be cancelled.

F-3954. But 163 only refers to forwarding?—Yes. I should like to clear the position. The reason why we are suggesting this change is because we want an intermediate control, our idea being ultimately to get entire freedom.

F-3955. I do not see that there is any intermediate control at all?—Under the Act, of course, not, but we have no guarantee that if an Act providing for such control is mooted it will be considered by the Legislative Assembly.

F-3956. You have been anxious throughout to avoid introducing legislation if you could?—That is the position.

F-3957. But suppose this suggestion were accepted, your association could not accept responsibility for those gardens which are not members of your association?—You have got to bear in mind that this suggestion means that we are not going to favour any alteration in the Act, or the rules or the executive orders, and that the Assam Labour Board must continue.

F-3958. It means that the local Governments will practically have no control at all, and the Assam Labour Board will be in the air. Suppose there is no such thing as illegal recruiting. It would be ineffective for the Assam Labour Board to attempt supervising?—I agree, but the Board can certainly represent such cases to Government and if Government consider that this privilege is being abused they could take executive action under section 3.

F-3959. That means re-introducing the old system?—Yes.

F-3960. There was a recent experiment when you opened recruitment in the province of Bombay; that was entirely free recruiting. The information we had in Bombay was that, to begin with at any rate, there were a number of unfortunate

incidents in connection with recruiting?—I think we have profited by that. Now we are recruiting through the Tea Districts Labour Association.

F-3961. You cannot guarantee that if you had a system of free recruiting all the Assam employers would recruit through the Tea Districts Labour Association?—I cannot guarantee, but still we may meet with good success. When it is successful in the case of Dooars I do not see any reason why we should not meet with the same success here as well.

F-3962. We have heard a lot of complaints about the tremendous expense incurred for recruiting, and there are certainly legitimate grounds for complaint?—As I endeavoured to show this morning, a good deal of expense is due to the inoperative *sardar* which, according to my calculation, represents about 37; then the clothing expenses which we incur. I am not taking into account the first advance that we give to the *sardar* because that is prescribed by an agreement of our own. But the second advance and the third advance are given according to the option of the local agents. Clothing is not prescribed; it was prescribed at one time but was done away with—a step which we are strongly against.

F-3963. It can be prescribed under section 163?—It is not now prescribed.

F-3964. But it can be?—Yes. Then we give a cash bonus of Rs. 5 to each of the new coolies at the dépôt and another Rs. 5 at the estate; this could be done away with. We incur higher expenses in connection with the railway journey than the Dooars or Ceylon. We have got our commission to *sardars* which could possibly be reduced by agreement by ourselves. Another very important factor is the large number of local agencies we maintain; we have 42 agencies as against possibly 8 for Ceylon. When we recruit from the Indian States we have got to pay Rs. 15 for each *sardar*'s license under the model rules and Rs. 5 for each coolie recruited. There is of course the commission to be paid to the Tea Districts Labour Association. If we had free recruiting, then the expenses in connection with some of these items at least could be reduced.

F-3965. Your Association has no control over the finances of the Tea Districts Labour Association?—No.

F-3966. Suppose an agency firm thinks that its overhead charges are excessive it would have no remedy except to start an organization of its own?—We have had the experience of starting an organization of our own at Bombay, and we found that it cost more than it would if we had recruited through the Tea Districts Labour Association. After all you have got to maintain your forwarding depots and various agencies.

F-3967. The only possible way in which most of the expense can be saved is by eliminating the *sardar*?—I have made a considerable study of that question and I still think that the *sardar* is the backbone of the system.

F-3968. If recruiting is done by any other method it ought to be considerably cheaper?—I agree with you that if you have more facilities in the matter of recruiting you would eliminate great expenditure. For instance, you can cut down by 20 per cent. the unsuccessful *sardars* which would considerably reduce the amount of expense.

F-3969. I think you suggested earlier that though you had the knowledge that some of the *sardars* would be unsuccessful yet you sent them because you wanted that they should maintain touch with their villages?—Yes. When I said that we could cut down by 20 per cent., I was answering a specific question for reducing the recruiting expense.

F-3970. But that expense will have to be borne under any other method of recruitment?—Yes.

F-3971. Do you think it worth-while to spend on *sardars* without any chance of getting recruits?—I do not know what the general opinion is, but personally I think it is a very good thing to do it. We practise it extensively.

F-3972. But the presumption is that if you did not derive any advantage you would not be sending unremunerative *sardars*?—Our main intention is that they should maintain touch with the villages.

Sir Alexander Murray: Under the present system the coolies can only be sent as *sardars*, and that is their difficulty.

F-3973. *The Chairman*: Would it not be better for you if you were free to send people on leave apart from making them *sardars*?—Yes. They do so in the Dooars. They are sent with what we call a leave chit so that the local agency dépôt people can identify them and arrange for their return to the estate.

F-3974. *Mr. Clow*: Was not one cause of the abuses which occurred under the old system of recruitment, the fact that the professional recruiter was not subject to control?—That is so.

F-3975. What I want to suggest is this: If the recruiter were a man subject to the full control of the local authorities on the spot, and they could at any time put him out of action, suspending his license he would not be such a dangerous individual?—I think we had some experience of that in the Dooars; I am speaking for my firm. We got the local officers to vet the people before we gave license to them.

F-3976. *The Chairman*: With what result?—The results were excellent. We enquired from the police inspector and if his report were not satisfactory, no license was issued.

F-3977. *Mr. Clow*: Looking at it from the point of view of the local official he is more likely to feel a sense of security if the man engaged were living on the spot subject to his supervision, direction and control than he would with a *sardar* who may appear and disappear very frequently?—I see your point. That was the very system that we followed in this particular case.

F-3978. It has been suggested that Act VI is responsible for the difficulties in the way of recruiting. Supposing there was free recruiting, do you consider that the conditions in Assam are sufficiently attractive to attract labour voluntarily and that it will come without any machinery whatever?—(*Mr. Insch*) A certain number would come.

F-3979. Not a substantial number?—No, because all will not know what the conditions are.

F-3980. As regards wages, is there any advantage in the unit system?—Yes, because the coolie may work for a short time on the garden.

F-3981. Do you not think that in some cases that may be a disadvantage both from the point of view of the management and from the point of view of the labourer?—It may be from the point of view of the management but not from that of the labourer because he spends the rest of the time on his rice fields.

F-3982. You subscribed earlier to the suggestion that if you gave more wages the coolie would do less work?—Yes.

F-3983. If that is actually the case you can make him do more work by paying him a smaller wage and putting the balance into a provident fund?—I think that would be unfair.

F-3984. Why? It is to his own interest to put it into a provident fund which would provide giving him a holiday later?—(*Mr. Crawford*) The ordinary coolie will not understand an intricate system like that. Four or five years ago we engaged 1,500 Santhals with a promise that they would be given 10 as. a day for 7 hours work. They arrived on the garden and sat tight; they did 3 or 4 *nals* and claimed 10 as., and we had to repatriate the whole lot of them.

F-3985. Do you consider that the standard of living of the coolies has risen during the last few years?—(*Mr. Insch*) Yes, I think it has.

F-3986. Is not that in itself a refutation of your theory, because if the coolie had fixed a limit to his earnings which would provide him with all his necessities, it is impossible for the standard of living to have risen?—It is much easier to earn now than it was before.

F-3987. It was suggested to us by many garden managers that the coolie works till he earns a fixed amount and that if you raise his wages he will simply do less work and keep his earnings at that same level?—I think he will work a little better. (*Mr. Crawford*) There are certain castes who are particularly anxious to make as much money as possible, while other classes want as long a leave as possible.

F-3988. In other words, you do not agree with the statement?—It can be of application in some cases but it cannot be of general application.

F-3989. Would you see any objection in allowing pedestrians—not traffic—a statutory right of access to all places, at any time, where the coolies live?—(*Mr. Insch*) I do not see how you can protect your lines from thieves. The coolies would object to it strongly.

F-3990. I am rather struck by the very great apprehension shown by the managers and shared, I think, by officials and probably justifiable, that labour might be very easily disturbed by outside influences. I know of no industry in India where the same attitude is taken?—You have the example of the disturbance in the jute mills.

F-3991. But I do not think the management or the officials spend sleepless nights wondering whether any agitator is coming or not?—I think they did have a sleepless night.

F-3992. This extraordinary apprehension that the labour may be excited is not general throughout India?

Colonel Garbett: We had a bad experience in 1921-22.

The witness (Mr. Crawford): We have to take into consideration the isolated nature of the tea gardens as compared with the jute mills in Calcutta. If there was any trouble there they could within a very short time get the assistance of the police but the same is not the case in the tea gardens.

F-3993. You would not be prepared to agree to the suggestion that this apprehension points to the idea that conditions might not be altogether satisfactory?—No.

F-3994. *The Chairman*: Apart from the question of the ingress of private individuals on to private property, are you aware of any cases where the garden workers are prevented from leaving the estate to attend to the markets and fairs?—*(Mr. Insch)*: No.

F-3995. So that they have the opportunity of mixing with their fellow-men or meeting any one who may wish to speak to them?—That is so.

F-3996. In your belief there is a full opportunity for those who live outside the tea gardens, should they please, to meet with any of their fellow citizens anywhere on the public roads or in any other public place, fairs or markets or otherwise?—That is so.

F-3997. *Mr. Cliff*: The Government say that in dealing with this problem we must take into account the joint family earnings. Is that the position taken up by your Association?—*(Mr. Insch)*: We do so.

F-3998. Do you regard that as an economic necessity of the tea industry that children's earnings should be taken into account?—No, I do not think that children would make a great deal of difference.

F-3999. Many of the children earn as much as the women? They often help their parents.

F-4000. And they seem to be employed for a pretty long period. If there should be anything like the present standard of life, is it necessary that they should depend on the earnings of the children?—If the parents would care to work a few more hours, it would not be necessary.

F-4001. With regard to the wages, speaking generally, there is a fairly common level in the several districts?—That is so.

F-4002. You have said that the adjustment of wages is a question for the sub-district associations?—Yes.

F-4003. Is there any difficulty, taking these district associations as units of organization, to co-opt suitable representatives of labour, and possibly Government officials, and determine the minimum wage or the common standard for these districts?—It is worthy of consideration.

F-4004. Would you be prepared to consider the question of minimum wage in relation to your own organization and see whether minimum wages cannot be fixed for the districts?—I do not see any economic or practical difficulty in it. If you consider that, I would be glad.

F-4004a. If recruiting is fairly free, is it not possible for your Association to give the public of India satisfaction that the people are being properly treated on the gardens; and as a means of giving satisfaction would you be prepared to have a Board of Control here in Assam to control the labour conditions here?—That is also worthy of consideration.

F-4005. Will it be possible, Mr. Chairman, to have these matters considered by the Association so that we may have their views on them?—If you put up a scheme, we are prepared to consider it.

F-4006. Now take the general position. I understand that public opinion in India wants control with regard to recruiting. My present view is that the public opinion here is not satisfied with the control in Assam, and wants to be satisfied that the conditions here are good. Having regard to the demand for free recruiting, would not your Association consider as one of the means of gaining public confidence the establishment of a Board of Control here in Assam?—Is it following Mr. Chalmers' proposal?

F-4007. I am not following his proposal at the moment. I am thinking of the particular point of gaining the public confidence of India. They want some one apart from tea garden managers to assure them that there is control and regulation in Assam.—Do you mean an official?

F-4008. I think you will have to co-opt somebody representing public opinion. Would you try and consider as an Association whether such a principle could be worked out in the tea industry here?—I doubt if the Association would be prepared to work it out. If we had a scheme put before us, we would consider it.

F-4009. You want us to put up a scheme?—Yes.

F-410. I am rather asking whether you would not consider the general principle and put up a scheme to us?

The Chairman: Mr. Cliff thinks that those who live in the industry know most about it and therefore most capable of preparing a scheme?—I could not promise that the association would put forward a scheme.

F-4011. *Mr. Cliff*: Would you give consideration to the question of gaining the confidence of the public in India by assuring them that apart from the tea planters themselves there are representatives of the public who can have some say in the regulation of wages and conditions of work in the tea industry? Would you give your consideration to that general proposition?—(*Mr. Crawford*) Have they no confidence in the Government of Assam?

Mr. Cliff: One might make many observations on that. I want the tea industry itself to inspire this confidence. I would be glad if you will consider it.

F-4012. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Mr. Cliff put a question to you indicating that the tea industry depended to a certain extent on the children's earnings to supplement the family earnings of the workers therein. I have taken out the figures which are given in Statement VII of the Emigration Report of the Province of Assam. It says that the total monthly average cash earnings (excluding allowances) based on September and March returns for the two divisions, the Assam Valley and the Cachar Valley, amounted to Rs. 47,67,895. The children's earnings shown against that are Rs. 4,31,608, or about 9 per cent. of the whole?—Yes.

F-4013. From the money point of view it would mean that 9 per cent. of the total wages are earned by the children?—Yes, with a free system of recruiting we could do without those children.

Mr. Cliff: Taking the report of Government and not counting annas, the children's earnings are in the relation of Rs. 7 to Rs. 24 to the family earnings.

Sir Alexander Murray: But there are more men and women than children working in the tea industry.

The Chairman: I think you view it from different standpoints. And both views seem to be correct.

F-4014. *Colonel Russell*: I think you have spent considerable sums of money estimated at several lakhs of rupees on the control of kala-azar with considerable success?—(*Mr. Insch*) Yes.

F-4015. You agree that unhealthy gardens are unpopular, and if properly controlled anti-malarial work were planned and carried out as energetically as you carried out the kala-azar campaign you would find less difficulty in recruiting labour and would have a greater labour force?—We are doing that now.

F-4016. But not to any large extent?—These anti-malarial schemes are still in an experimental stage.

F-4017. There seems to be very little relationship between the Assam Public Health Department and the tea areas. Are you in favour of closer co-operation between the two?—Yes, much closer co-operation.

F-4018. Would you favour the appointment of one or two expert malariologists, probably by Government, to advise medical officers and managers in connection with the control of malaria?—We are at present subscribing to the Tropical School of Medicine, Calcutta. Some others have made their own arrangements.

F-4019. Apparently some of the advice that you have had has not resulted in very much success?—No.

F-4020. So that would it not be better if an expert malariologist lived in Assam for a considerable period of time, thoroughly acquainted himself with the conditions here and then made specific recommendations?—It would be worthy of consideration. (*Mr. Crawford*) You are aware that the Tropical School of Medicine has an expert malariologist on their staff. There has been a difference of opinion between

that expert and certain other experts in regard to anti-malarial work here. If you get a difference of opinion among experts, how can we proceed?

F-4021. That is why I suggest the appointment of an expert malarialogist who would stay in Assam and study the conditions here thoroughly for some time and then make recommendations. He would be in a more favourable position to make recommendations than a man who comes here for a week or a month and makes certain recommendations which may or may not be carried out.—(Mr. Insch) That is a point which will go before the Assam Branch. It would come to us through that Branch. (Mr. Crawford) Malaria has been considerably reduced on many gardens. Any one who knows about Dr. Ramsay's work will agree that considerable progress has been made in this direction.

F-4022. My point is that this work should be general, because it would be to your ultimate benefit. Would not a scheme of the kind I have suggested be better?—(Mr. Insch) Yes.

F-4023. *The Chairman*: As representatives of the Indian Tea Association, I want to draw your attention to the use of certain terms which have a bad effect on your recruiting. I see that the word "absconding" is used in many places. We are not accustomed in other parts of the world and in other industries to call a man who leaves his work an "absconder." We quite understand there are two things: absence with leave and absence without leave. Would it be possible for you to get rid of the term?—I gather that it is a relic of old days?—Yes, we shall do so.

Mr. Cliff: The Government also use that expression.

F-4024. *The Chairman*: The Government also?—It is just as well to get rid of the terms which refer to a past period and which carry some unpleasant meaning along with them. They tend to make the people think that something still exists which may have passed away?—Yes.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Mr. T. C. CRAWFORD, Mr. J. A. MILLIGAN and Lieutenant-Colonel D. S. MACKAY, representatives of the Tea Districts Labour Association, Calcutta.

F-4025. Mr. Clow: How long has your Association been in operation?—(Mr. Crawford) It was started in 1892.

F-4026. Sir Alexander Murray: I think this must be put on record. In 1859 there was a tea planters' association for the purpose of recruiting. In 1861 the competition of the contractors necessitated an enquiry which resulted in the first Act to regulate recruiting.—These are the standing instructions of the Association and this gives an account of its origin. (Note put in.)

F-4027. Mr. Clow: It is more or less in recent years that the Association has attained a dominating position in respect of recruitment?—In my time, going back 12 years, there has been very little difference in membership.

F-4028. What percentage of recruitment do you control?—Ninety-three per cent. of Assam and 88 per cent. of the European interests in the Dooars. (Mr. Milligan) We do not know what percentage of the total labour force in the Dooars is sent by us, because we do not know the figures of what other people recruit.

F-4029. Sir Alexander Murray: Could you not give an estimate on the acreage basis? Will it be 93 per cent. of the acreage in Assam and 50 per cent. of the acreage in the Dooars?—(Mr. Crawford) We find it difficult to get the acreage figures.

F-4030. Mr. Clow: You are not concerned with the Darjeeling area?—No, we recruit for the Dooars and the Terai. The same type of labour is suitable for the gardens on the plains. But quite a different type of labour is needed for the hill gardens. They are worked by Nepalese labourers.

F-4031. Could you give some indication of the organization you maintain for the purposes of recruiting?—(Mr. Milligan) Under Act VI local agents must be appointed for every district not necessarily in every district; it depends on the orders of the Local Government. To all these local agents *sardars* are accredited. These local agents are in some places grouped together under Superintendents.

Colonel Mackay is the Superintendent of the Central Provinces Agencies other than Raipur and Bilaspur. Similarly, we have other Superintendents. I am the Superintendent of the Association who lives in Calcutta, and go on tour visiting the several places as required by the Committee. A separate control is exercised by the Secretaries of the Association, Messrs. Begg, Dunlop and Co., Ltd. Above the whole of this organisation there is the Committee of the Association.

F-4032. *The Chairman*: What is the status of these agents and Superintendents in terms of salary?—Colonel Mackay is the senior Local Agent. His salary is Rs. 1,800 a month. He is the Local Agent at Jubbulpur and the Superintendent of the other Local Agents in that circle. He has been 25 years in India, 8 years as a tea planter, and 17 years as a Local Agent of the Tea Districts Labour Association. He is at present Superintendent of the Upper Central Provinces Agencies, and Local Agent at Jubbulpur. He has held charge of the Agencies at Ranchi, Waltair, Bilaspur, Raipur, Cuttack, and Jubbulpore. Here is a note which will give an idea of the status of the various local agents (handing in note).

The Chairman: I wanted to satisfy myself that they were persons of responsibility and substance.

F-4033. *Mr. Clow*: How do you select the Local Agents?—The Local Agents are selected by the Committee. A list of applicants is maintained in the office of the Secretaries. When a vacancy occurs suitable applicants may be asked to visit the various members of the executive committee who record their opinion about the applicants. I am also asked to give my opinion about the prospective candidates. The appointment is made by the Committee after considering these opinions.

F-4034. How is the Committee appointed?—The Assam members of the general committee are elected by the votes of the garden managers. Up country managers are sent ballot papers in which they record their votes for their members. Calcutta members also are elected by vote. The General Committee then appoints the Executive Committee.

F-4035. Does the Committee control the financial side, or is that controlled by the Secretaries?—Sanction of the Committee has to be obtained for any extraordinary items of expenditure. There is a regular budget and within the budget the Secretaries have discretion to spend money.

F-4036. Is your Association run for profit, or not?—It is not run for profit.

F-4037. What do you do with profits if they accrue?—In the event of profit being made it is put in the reserve fund if the reserve fund should require that. It is also redistributed among the members in the form of concessions in the succeeding year.

F-4038. Are the Local Agents whole-time officers?—Absolutely whole-time officers.

F-4039. What about the Local Agents of other agencies?—You mean the three local agents in Ranchi?

F-4040. Yes?—All three are whole-time employees, but one has tea gardens to look after as well as the recruiting agency.

F-4041. The business of the Local Agents, I take it, is to supervise the work of the *sardars* and start the process of forwarding the coolies they recruit?—They have also to register the coolies under the Government rules. There are no official registering officers appointed under the Act. The Local Agent keeps an eye on the *sardar* and reports any offences committed by him. He also takes disciplinary action in the case of any misconduct on the part of the *sardar*. But he is not in a position to give assistance to the *sardar* in the operation of recruiting, even in the way of propaganda. He is allowed to finance him. Registering and forwarding the coolies is his principal business.

F-4042. How is he allowed to finance him?—Are there any rules of the Association in regard to this?—A sub-committee of the Indian Tea Association lays down a maximum for first advances. It has not met for some years. We are still acting on the last decision. First advances are regulated by consideration of the distance the *sardar* has to travel from the place of accommodation to the place where he is going to recruit. In the case of short distances, a small first advance is given, and the *sardar* returns in a week or two for a second advance, on which he is expected to bring in recruits. Such advances range from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10. When the distance to be travelled, and other difficulties, render it impossible for the *sardar* to return soon to the Local Agent, a larger advance is given so as to enable him to bring in recruits without having to return for more money first, and to cover

his subsistence for a period of some duration. For instance, in the case of *sardars* operating in Bastar State through the Raipur Agency (which is a very long journey and the *sardar* is not likely to return for a month) the first advance is up to Rs. 40.

F-4043. Could you very briefly describe the course of the *sardar* from the time he leaves the garden?—He takes a certificate from the garden manager and then goes to the District Magistrate. If the latter is satisfied that he is a fit and proper person to be a *sardar*, he countersigns the certificate. The *sardar* then proceeds to Gauhati. All he is supposed to get from his employer is his fare to the nearest place of accommodation of the Tea Districts Labour Association, which, in the case of Assam, is Gauhati. We take him over, and send him through our various agencies till he arrives at the place of the Local Agent who is going to supervise his operations. He is then registered in an official prescribed register No. 1. We have a card system under which a separate card is opened for every *sardar*, in which all the particulars about him are entered and the history of his operations while he is in the recruiting district, the payments made to him, the number of coolies he recruits, and so on. The completed card could be used as a bill of cost.

F-4044. Does he get any advance at that stage?—He gets nothing until he reaches his home district. His first advance is regulated according to the orders of the Committee. The subsequent advances depend on the success of his operations and the amount of money he requires for the purpose of bringing in prospective recruits. We have an arrangement for the payment of village debts. For example, here is a typical bill of the Tea Districts Labour Association with the various items. The cost of recruiting in this particular case is not very high; it works out to Rs. 40 a head.

F-4045. That depends on the number of coolies that the *sardar* brings?—Yes, the whole thing depends on the success of the *sardar*. The *sardar* reaches the local agency and then, taking the first advance the amount of which depends on the distance of his village from the local agency, goes to his home village and spends a few weeks there looking round for prospective recruits. He then goes back to the dépôt and receives a second advance the amount of which depends on his prospects of recruiting as estimated by the Local Agent. After he receives the second advance he goes out again and either comes back with coolies or without any coolies as the case may be. If he brings any coolies they are entered on the back of his card and registered in Register No. II. The coolies are then fed and clothed and forwarded by a convenient train.

F-4046. If the *sardar* does not accompany the coolies and stays behind to do more recruiting who accompanies the coolies?—We have a staff of peons to escort the coolies from point to point.

F-4047. If the *sardar* brings any number of coolies is he given any bonus by the Local Agent?—No bonus is paid by us.

F-4048. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You give Rs. 10 or Rs. 15 when he goes out for the second time. That is all if he does not bring anybody; but if he brings 10 or 15 recruits you will increase that second advance?—We strictly insist upon the principle that the advance is not a reward for work done; it is a payment to enable him to do the work which we expect him to do. He does not get anything in the shape of commission till he returns to his employer.

F-4049. You vary the second advance sometimes Rs. 10 and sometimes Rs. 15?—Some Local Agents misunderstand the principle of the second advance. They think that it should be based on the success of the *sardar* with the first advance. This is against the principle of the Association on which they are supposed to work.

F-4050. *Mr. Clow*: Suppose a coolie reaches a garden and the manager finds him unfit or unsatisfactory. In such cases do you repatriate him?—It is not unusual for such coolies to be sent back at the expense of the Association. I used to tour in Assam and a number of cases were brought to my notice. I do not think such cases occur frequently. Whenever a case like that was brought to my notice, and I was satisfied that a mistake had been made. I strongly recommended that the Association should send the coolie back, and my recommendation has always been accepted.

F-4051. Do the Local Agents have a medical examination of the coolies in the recruiting areas?—Under Act VI medical examination is optional. A number of employers believe that the coolies are frightened by medical examination. Especially in the case of the jungly coolies it is so. When they have to go from a dépôt to a hospital and wait the convenience of the Civil Surgeon there and if he sticks a needle into them they are frightened. But in the case of coolies who have once been to Assam there is no such apprehension.

F-4052. You have inoculation done always?—That is always done.

F-4053. Where is the medical examination conducted?—In agencies where we have our own doctors it is done in a special room in the dépôt fitted up as a dispensary. Elsewhere we engage the Civil Surgeon or doctors of that rank, and in some places this involves going to the hospital.

F-4054. It has been suggested to us yesterday that the Local Agent in performing a dual function and being partly responsible to Government through the Assam Labour Board and partly responsible to you, is in an anomalous position. Is there no clash between the two duties?—The responsibility of the Local Agent to Government is not so much through the Assam Labour Board as direct to the District Magistrate in terms of the rules of Government. The Assam Labour Board has to see that the rules are carried out. The Local Agent does not communicate with Government through the Assam Labour Board. He reports to the District Magistrate direct and the function of the Labour Board is to see that that duty is always attended to. (Col. Mackay) There is no clash between the two, because the duties we discharge on behalf of the law, and on behalf of the tea gardens are identical. If I prevent a minor boy from proceeding to Assam I am acting on behalf of the law and the Act. I am also acting on behalf of the tea gardens, because although the tea garden may be hard up for labour they are not looking for run-away boys or people of that description. There is no clash in any way.

F-4055. Do you find your work hampered in any way by those to whose interest it is to retain the labour in the recruiting areas?—(Mr. Milligan) No doubt such a feeling widely exists. It is rather an illogical feeling when it expresses itself side by side with the feeling that conditions in Assam are such that no one would want to go there. There is a fear that if we got free recruiting there would be such an exodus of labour to Assam that the cost of labour in the recruiting areas would rise considerably. In some areas men are kept under a system which is not very different from bondage. This sort of thing is found not only in Indian States but in parts of British India as well. In Hazaribagh and Palamau they have the *Kamiauti* system. Similar systems exist in other places; as for example in South India, in the Agency tracts, the *Goti* system is somewhat similar. Generally speaking the Indian States in which we recruit are up-land countries with poor soil. Enforced labour is the only means by which the rulers of those States can get anything out of the poorest classes. The poor people could not pay money rent; they are therefore made to render free service. The right to that free labour has come to be exercised by all sorts of petty officers. It is nowadays a real burden on the people.

F-4056. Do you find that where the *Kamiauti* system or system of forced labour exists obstacles are put in the way of those who wish to emigrate?—Naturally the man who has a right to free labour is not going to help us to take away his labourer. The *Kamiauti* system goes even further than that; it is really a system of slavery and worse than the ordinary beggar systems.

F-4057. How do you propose to reduce the cost of recruitment?—The reduction will depend naturally on increasing the efficiency of the recruiting agencies. Some *sardars* bring 6 or 7 coolies whereas others do not bring even one each. Hence the average cost is very high. If you could eliminate those who are not successful and replace them by *sardars* who are likely to be successful the cost per head would automatically go down.

F-4058. Do you think there is much opening for recruiters other than *sardars*?—The experiment will have to be made very cautiously; because in most of the Provinces where we have been recruiting for a long time the class known as the *arkatti*, while it has been out of action possibly for 15 years, has not died out. We do not propose—I do not think the Indian Tea Association proposes—any wholesale and sudden revival of the old system. It would be more useful if *sardars* were assisted by local people who are in a position to help, such as the missionaries. We have conducted experiments in Bombay in using the professional recruiter. We had evidence to show that even in a place like Bombay which is strange to recruiting, we must be cautious in trying an experiment of this character. But if we want to revive this kind of recruiting in a Province like Bihar and Orissa we must be very cautious indeed.

F-4059. You would, I presume, experiment in that direction?—Exactly.

F-4060. Provided you get a satisfactory type of men there are distinct advantages in the professional recruiters in spite of their unsavoury reputation?—The best professional recruiter is a tea garden coolie who has finished his work in Assam and gone back to his village and sets up as a professional recruiter and sends up coolies. At present he would be an illegal person.

F-4061. If a system of repatriation at the end of 2 or 3 years became fairly general do you think that it would facilitate recruiting?—It will certainly facilitate recruiting in the case of a certain type of labour, namely single men and those who have no intention of settling in Assam. If by any chance the bulk of the labour on the tea gardens should become of that temporary character, I think, the system would be unworkable for we should be repatriating the whole force once in three years. How could we replace the whole labour force?

F-4062. *The Chairman*: Surely the assumption then would be that a substantial proportion of the people who came originally for 3 years would elect to stay. There would be a healthy competition amongst tea garden managers to have the largest possible proportion of people settling down. They would offer their labour sufficient inducements to stay and make their conditions such that after three years' experience the bulk of them would prefer to stay. It would be a matter of pride to a garden manager that his percentage was the highest in the district. —Yes, that is so. We find that the only coolies who are interested in such matters as repatriation, wages and so on are the people who are going up for a definite period and intending to go home again. But a man who goes to a garden with the intention of living on the garden for the rest of his life does not exhibit any interest when the local agent tells him of the conditions on the garden. He has already heard something about it from the *sardar* and he is not a bit interested in the description given by the Local Agent. If you give this right of repatriation in a way which, as far as I know, no other industry does (in the case of other industries such as those of Ceylon and Malaya, only disappointed men, and men whose health has broken down, are sent home within the first year of their emigration), if you give this right to strong able bodied men how can you deny it to people who are already in Assam and settled on the garden. When you send back a batch of people after their term is over, a lot of other coolies will come to you and ask to be repatriated. It would have a disturbing effect on the labour force.

F-4063. That would bear out the assumption that a larger number than we heard of were unhappy and desired to go home?—Not necessarily. Even if they are not unhappy the prospect of a free trip home is always tempting. (*Mr. Crawford*) In a certain garden we repatriated coolies who had engaged for 9 months, or short terms. Then a number of coolies who were engaged permanently and who had settled on the garden said: "Why do you send them home. We also want to go home. Send us also in the same way." There was no alternative for the garden but to send them also. That is one instance. Of course a good number of the coolies returned to the garden since. (*Colonel Mackay*) In considering this question of repatriation you have to divide the labour into two classes: one class goes up to make as much money as it can and as quickly as it can and then returns home. That class is very definitely interested in repatriation. They are what we call "short-termers" and can be called "migrants." The other class are "emigrants" that come up here for the same reason that the Britisher goes to Canada. He takes his family with him, and moves to Assam without any thought of going back. He hopes to have a full belly in Assam and he is content. We have to consider the two classes separately in the matter of repatriation. If the right of repatriation is given to the "emigrant" class I do not think it will be an attraction. But for the other class, the "migrants," there will be a definite attraction.

F-4064. I think it would surely remove a good deal of the general prejudice that exists in recruiting areas that when people once go to Assam—I am not now speaking of the definitely short term people—they are gone for ever.—I think that impression is dying out a good deal already.

F-4065. *Mr. Clow*: You do not suggest that this right of repatriation at the end of so long a fixed period as 3 years is not an attraction to the short-term man? You cannot call a 3 years' man a short-term man.

F-4066. *The Chairman*: If the 3 years' condition tend to gradually increase your recruits of that kind, then I take it you would less and less have to use the 6, 9, and 12 months method which you have only been driven to adopt by extreme scarcity of labour?—Quite true, but it is a matter of opinion whether the adoption of the 3 years' system would have that effect. I cannot recommend that as an immediate palliative.

* F-4067. Of course you would have to continue your short-term recruitment in special cases until the other system had proved its success?—Yes.

F-4068. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Is short-term dying out at the moment on account of the unprofitable state of the market some time since?—Yes. (*Mr. Milligan*) Yes. Short-term recruiting would provide a means of getting additional labour when required in special times.

F-4069. *Mr. Clow*: So far as it concerns those who have been described as "emigrants" by Colonel Mackay, if they had a right of repatriation at the end of 3 years, I take it that the right would almost be invariably exercised by them as an opportunity of having a holiday in their own country?—(*Colonel Mackay*) The "emigrant" might exercise his right of going back on a holiday; but it is not certain he would go back to his country after he has finished his 3 years. He might settle on Government land.

F-4070. Are there many cases of persons having lands returning to their country?—Not when a man has been there 3 years.

F-4071. Is it your experience that the attitude of the subordinate magistrates in recruiting districts is hostile to your operations?—(*Mr. Milligan*) No. On the other hand, in the majority of cases magistrates are helpful and quite friendly. It is only in the Ranchi District that we have had opposition from the local magistrates recently. The reason for it I am not in a position to say. Magistrates, one after another have adopted an attitude of hostility.

F-4072. Is it due to historical causes?—It is only a recent development. There was no such hostility 5 or 6 years ago. (*Colonel Mackay*) The magistrates and the police officers, especially the senior officers were very friendly.

F-4073. *The Chairman*: It has been said that the present interpretation of Act VI is very strict and prohibits assisting by propaganda. Supposing those two blocks were removed have you any estimate how far it would increase the flow of recruits?—(*Mr. Milligan*) It is most dangerous to remove the word "assist" from the Act altogether because it would give rise to a class of assisted migrants who would be outside the Act and sent up to Assam by professional recruiters without registering them anywhere.

F-4074. Assist the *sardars*, I mean?—There is nothing illegal about assisting the *sardar* as the Act stands at present. The notification under section 3 could be altered as follows: "Government is pleased to prohibit all persons from recruiting otherwise than by means of garden *sardars*." If this were done the question of illegality in the matter of help given to a *sardar* will not in general arise. But at present it reads: "Government is pleased to prohibit all persons other than *sardars* from assisting or taking any part"

F-4075. Supposing this obstacle and the obstacle regarding the use of propaganda be cleared away, would it greatly help recruiting?—In some places the effect would be considerable. But there are a great many places where there will no immediate effect. We should have substantial improvement in the Ranchi district.

F-4076. You cannot give an estimate of the possible increase?—No, I cannot. (*Colonel Mackay*) We have tried propaganda very heavily in years past. In 1914 every *sardar* from my Local Agency was given printed handbills in his own language which he took with him describing the beauties of life on a tea garden. But the obstacle was the great illiteracy. Nobody could read the handbills except the few people in the village, the money-lenders and so on who did not want the people to migrate. So we came to deadlock. (*Mr. Crawford*) We now propose to do propaganda with the help of the cinema. We have tried it in one district. (*Mr. Milligan*) I am very much in favour of propaganda particularly in districts in which Assam is not known or not well known. Unfortunately in these districts we have few recruiting connections. Without a relaxation of the Act in the matter of recruiting restrictions, propaganda cannot be of much use. If we could legally recruit through accredited agents with the help of properly conducted propaganda it would have a marked effect on recruiting.

F-4076a. I am assuming that you are allowed to use methods which are used by the Canadian Government in England in giving information and to a certain extent inducing people to migrate from England to Canada. Could you still not give an estimate of how far that would increase the numbers flowing to Assam?—(*Colonel Mackay*) It is a most difficult thing to estimate the immediate result of propaganda. It is not like newspaper advertising of, say, Lipton's Tea.

F-4077. In your view it would probably bring about a substantial increase?—It would probably increase it to some extent.

F-4078. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Is there a different interpretation put on the word "assist" in different recruiting areas?—(*Mr. Milligan*) In the Ranchi district assistance given to a *sardar* is taken to be indirect assistance given to the emigrant and as such considered illegal. There is nothing in the Act to say that. We had a ruling of the Judicial Commissioner of Chota Nagpur to the effect that he found nothing in the Act to debar anyone from assisting a garden *sardar* in performing his legitimate function. That ruling was qualified by subsequent orders

to the extent that if assistance is in the direction of helping a man to emigrate it is deemed illegal as being indirect assistance to the emigrant himself.

F-4079. *Mr. Clow*: Is not the word "induce" rather an unfortunate one?—The word "induce" should be omitted altogether. But as I pointed out before we cannot omit the word "assist;" it will have to be qualified.

F-4080. All propaganda will come under the category of inducing?—Under section 164 it is an offence to induce any person, but in order to prove the offence the person who has been induced by the propaganda must be produced. We, however, have been told that general propaganda however conducted is illegal.

F-4081. *The Chairman*: With regard to the village debts which you have cleared off I have been looking at one or two *sardars'* sheets and I find that in one case it is Rs. 20 and in another Rs. 40. What would be the average debt of an emigrant which is paid off by you? I suppose it is paid at the gardens' expense?—Yes. It is difficult to state an average, as such payments are not made in every district or in the case of every emigrant.

F-4082. Is that in any way charged against the emigrant?—No, the emigrant starts life on a tea garden entirely free from all debts and with a bonus in hand of Rs. 10; also an outfit, household utensils, and so on. He gets Rs. 5 in the recruiting district and Rs. 5 on his arrival in the garden.

F-4083. *Sir Alexander Murray*: You have said that Rs. 40 was the debt of a man which you cleared off. How did you ascertain that it was Rs. 40?—It was verified by the Local Agent, and paid to the man to whom the money was owed. When village debts are paid by a *sardar*, such payments are included in the advances to the *sardar*.

F-4084. *The Chairman*: Payment of debt also constitutes one of the items of the cost of recruitment?—Yes.

F-4085. It would be rather interesting to have over a period the amount of village debts that are paid off in this way?—As a matter of fact I tried to get out the figures, but the labour involved in collecting them was such that I could not get them in time. If the original programme of examining us in February had been adhered to, those figures would have been ready.

F-4086. Could you take it over 1,000 typical cases in one or two districts, and let us have a statement on this point?—Yes.

F-4087. *Miss Power*: I suppose these debts are those of long term recruits?—I know of no case of debt of a short-term coolie being paid off.

F-4088. What is the maximum amount that would be paid off by you?—It might go to the extent of Rs. 100 for a good family batch.

F-4089. Has such a thing ever happened in your experience in the case of single men?—I have never heard of it. (*Colonel Mackay*) I have found that, in agencies where it becomes a common practice to pay debts, creditors soon become the rule and not the exception.

F-4090. *Colonel Garbett*: Do you consider there is much more suitable labour available for Assam?—(*Colonel Mackay*) You have to divide the labour into two classes. I consider that there is still a very large supply of short-term labour available, but that we are approaching the limit, in some districts, of the supply of the suitable settler class of labour.

F-4091. Do you consider that, in view of your experience, you would be a more efficient registering officer than a magistrate or an officer specially engaged for the purpose?—In view of the fact that I have been a planter for eight years, I probably should be a more efficient registering officer. When I register a man I look at him from the point of view of fulfilling the Act, and also from the point of view of his suitability as a tea garden labourer. A fine strapping fellow would be passed by the magistrate, who is only concerned with fulfilling the requirements of the Act, but I might come to the conclusion that that fine strapping fellow was a Brahmin, or was otherwise quite useless for tea garden work and I would reject him where the magistrate would pass him.

F-4092. Do you keep a register of all labourers going to the Dooars?—(*Mr. Milligan*) Yes, very nearly as elaborate as the one kept by Government orders in the case of Assam emigrants. (*Colonel Mackay*) And a copy of this register is sent to the District Magistrate daily in some provinces and monthly in other provinces.

F-4093. *Mr. Clow*: For the Dooars?—No. (*Mr. Milligan*) I will hand in the different orders of the different Governments on the subject of sending in the registers and on the subject of the detention of single females (handing in document).

F-4094. *Colonel Garbett*: Have you any figures regarding your own Agency. Colonel Mackay, showing the amount of advances given?—(*Colonel Mackay*) In my Local Agency and in the other sub-agencies under me the advances averaged Rs. 17 last year per head. That includes 41 per cent. of unsuccessful sardars.

F-4095. *Mr. Clow*: Rupees 17 per head recruited or per head of sardar?—Per head recruited.

F-4096. What do you mean by "includes unsuccessful sardars?"—I mean that 2,053 sardars recruited 4,569 people, but of those 2,053 sardars 41 per cent. were unsuccessful.. Nevertheless the total advances, which includes those paid to the unsuccessful sardars, amounted to an average of Rs. 17.

F-4097. *The Chairman*: What you call unsuccessful sardars were those sardars who never intended to recruit?—Yes, a very large proportion.

F-4098. Those who came down on leave?—Yes.

F-4099. Would it not be very much better, if the law allowed it, to have a recognized system of leave on return pay, and not to pretend that they are sardars when they are not?—That practically operates now. The law does not forbid it. It is managers who must classify their sardars.

F-4100. They would not be able to come back again except through the sardars?—(*Mr. Milligan*) That restriction applies only to those who have severed their connection with the garden and who have not merely gone home on leave. The advice which this Association gives to managers is that any one who is going home on leave should be furnished with a recruiter's certificate in case any of his relatives or friends might want to return with him. (*Colonel Mackay*) To continue with my figures, the overhead costs in my agency were 12.9 rupees per head of the people who emigrated, so that advances and the whole cost of the Local Agency and staff amounted to less than Rs. 30 a head of persons recruited and sent to Assam.

F-4101. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Would it not be better to have a registering officer who has nothing to do with the tea industry? Suppose there is a great demand for labour: if the registering officer is employed by the employers, obviously his orders would be to pass anybody and everybody irrespective of the fitness of the men?—I cannot conceive such a situation arising. Only people fit for tea garden work would be sent up. A registering officer who passed any one else would be doing a great disservice to the industry he was serving. A useless man on a garden is a dead loss. Apart from that, who would be gaining anything by sending up anybody and everybody?—I reject over 25 per cent. of the people who come before me.

F-4102. On what grounds do you reject them?—On grounds of physique or medical unfitness or on grounds of caste, or on grounds of domestic matters, and for a hundred and one other reasons.

F-4103. If you have to go recruiting in the famine stricken area, how does the question of physique come in?—I have never recruited in a famine stricken district, but I have been in a local agency alongside a famine stricken district, and the actual number of people who came in was 61,000, of which 16,000 were rejected. So that it is not a question of gobbling up everybody. (*Mr. Crawford*) Our total rejections for last year were 11.5 per cent. of our recruitment. (*Colonel Mackay*) In Jubbulpore it was 26 per cent. due to the proximity of a large city, and also of a famine stricken area.

F-4104. How can you suggest that any of the reasons which you have advanced would not equally weigh with an official who was appointed as a registering officer?—(*Colonel Mackay*) Because a magistrate would naturally be purely concerned with observing the conditions of the Act. He would not look at the recruits with a view to seeing their suitability as tea garden labourers. He would also not be concerned with the caste of the people.

F-4105. Why do you presume that the officer must necessarily be a magistrate?—I do not. You presumed that.

F-4106. Suppose the registering officer is an official?—If he had been a tea planter, or if he had some other experience of labour, I would not object to him in the least.

F-4107. In view of the fact that you have to go to all this heavy cost of recruiting, even to the extent of having to pay a man's debts, would it not be a cheaper method to so alter the conditions of work and wages here that

labour would be naturally attracted to your tea gardens?—(*Mr. Crawford*) I have already dealt with that point fairly fully during the course of the day.

F-4108. If the conditions of labour and of wages here were attractive, would not that bring more recruits and a better class of recruit?—(*Mr. Milligan*) It would certainly affect the recruitment of people coming up for a definite period for the purpose of making money, but it would not have any appreciable effect on the numbers of permanent emigrants coming to Assam, because it is economic pressure in their own country which is sending them away, and not the prospect of what they are going to get at the end of the journey; they would come irrespective of the conditions in Assam.

F-4109. Am I to take it that the reason why the conditions and wages are as they are on these tea plantations is because you get your particular class of recruit from that class which is being forced by temporary economic necessity to come up here?—No. The coolies we get from some of the Native States are in a permanent condition of economic difficulty. To them a wage of an anna a day is not at all abnormal. For example, in Koraput, if we pay three annas a day we will get all the labour we require for our building work there because all they get from the Public Works Department there is 1½ annas a day. Such people come to Assam, and can earn at a minimum 4 annas a day. Being first class coolies they actually earn much more than that. It is absolute wealth to them.

F-4110. I am looking at the class which is referred to in the memorandum of the Indian Tea Association, where it is complained that they are unable to get recruits from Sambhalpur because of Tatas' industry starting there and the railways opening up?—They can get an attractive wage without leaving home. At the present time in great Britain there are over one million unemployed, but they are not all migrating.

F-4111. *Mr. Cliff*: They are not all eligible?—Even though they may be available for employment at home they may not necessarily be available for employment overseas. There is an enormous supply of potential labour in the recruiting districts which is not available for Assam.

F-4112. *Divan Chaman Lall*: Are you quite satisfied that, even under the present system, there is no fraud or misrepresentation?—(*Colonel Mackay*) I am quite satisfied. It is practically impossible. (*Mr. Milligan*) I do not agree with Colonel Mackay. There is fraud and misrepresentation, but we have got such an efficient agency for detecting it that coolies do not come to Assam as victims of fraud and misrepresentation. (*Colonel Mackay*) I see what you mean. I agree with Mr. Milligan.

F-4113. If recruitment were absolutely free, as you want it to be, what checks, apart from your own local agencies would you suggest?—(*Mr. Milligan*) In the first place, this Association has not committed itself to the statement that it considers that recruitment should be free.

F-4114. It is a question of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde?—No.. It may be that a number of individuals on the committee of the Tea Districts Labour Association are also on the committee of the Indian Tea Association, but it does not follow that the policy of the two bodies is identical. The same gentlemen may be on the Assam Labour Board, but when they are there they have an entirely different policy.

F-4115. What is your policy?—We consider that restrictions should be removed from the methods of recruitment, but that there should be an efficient control. We are sufficiently conceited to believe that we are able to impose an adequate control ourselves on those who recruit through us, and on those who produce the coolies before us.

F-4116. What do you suggest?—I suggest that the model of the Ceylon Labour Commission would be suitable for the Tea Districts Labour Association. The Ceylon Labour Commission is an unofficial body appointed and paid by the Ceylon Planters Association. Prior to 1923 its position and function were exactly analogous to those of the Tea Districts Labour Association. In that year it was invested by the Government of India with the function of carrying out the provisions of the Rules framed under Act VII of 1922, the Ceylon Labour Commissioner being given the office of the Ceylon Emigration Commissioner, and his deputy being appointed Deputy Emigration Commissioner, while the various superior officers of the Commission were vested with the authority of Inspectors. The Ceylon Labour Commission, like the Tea Districts Labour

Association, does not include in its membership all estates, but it discharges the duties of selection, registration and forwarding in respect of the recruits of non-members. For members it does various other services, such as financing *kamganis*.

F-4117. Since you take that as an example, would you also be in favour of a minimum wage regulation in Assam?—That is outside my province altogether. If you are asking me whether the existence of a minimum wage would prove an attraction in recruiting, my answer is the same as in the previous case, namely, that anything of that kind would no doubt stimulate temporary recruiting, but would have no appreciable effect on the supply of permanent emigrants.

F-4118. *The Chairman*: Have we got in writing your views on the amendment of the law which you recommend?—A short synopsis was put in this morning which represents my views as well as those of others.

F-4119. We may take it that that carries your agreement?—Yes, with the proviso that the first of the two schemes put forward in that note is merely a makeshift. It is a means of getting substantial concessions under Act VII without the necessity of going to any legislative body. If we have to change a single word, the word "assist" or "induce," that means legislation, and legislation means a new Act. It is either a new Act or making the best of the existing Act without alteration. We further know that the difficulties in the way of getting new legislation of a suitable type are so great that not only is there likely to be a long delay, but there is no guarantee that the Act, when we get it, will improve our position materially. Therefore we would prefer to have an experiment tried under the existing Act. The draft Act which we have submitted to the Government of India leaves control to be exercised by the industry itself; it merely postulates the appointment of local agents. There was a preliminary draft which on consideration we decided not to send in, in which it was definitely proposed that local agents should have the official status of registering officers and in fact be on practically the same footing as the agents of the Ceylon Labour Commission; but it was felt that discussions had not gone far enough to justify the putting forward of such a definite proposal.

F-4120. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: If you are in favour of the Ceylon system, you know that that is bound up with certain conditions laid down by the Government of India and agreed to by the Ceylon Government, one of those conditions being the Ceylon Ordinance?—Yes. Our Association is, however, not concerned in any way with the wages paid in Assam, except that we have to inform the prospective emigrant of the conditions to which he is going.

F-4121. What is your view on the question of minimum wages for Assam?—If I were to express an opinion on that point it would be a purely private view and not the view of the Tea Districts Labour Association which does not consider such questions.

F-4122. But if you are basing your plans on the Ceylon arrangements, would it not be advisable in order to help recruiting that better conditions should be obtained for the workers and that those better conditions should be made known in the recruiting areas?—It is our duty to make known the conditions existing in Assam as they are reported to us by the employers. I have not suggested that we should adopt the whole Ceylon system; I was merely referring to the control part of that system which is carried out by the Ceylon Labour Commission. The system of financing it, though a very attractive one, has grave practical difficulties with regard to Assam. We could never hope that our *sardars* would have the efficiency of the Ceylon *Kamganis* because the latter are operating in places where the economic conditions are unusually favourable to recruiting. Practically the whole of the Ceylon's almost unlimited labour recruitment is conducted in four districts. There are no four districts in Northern India which have anything like that amount of labour available. Those districts are comparatively close to Ceylon, and though it is a long journey going to Ceylon, owing to the detention at Mandapam, I am informed that on some estates in Ceylon, the returning emigrant can leave to-day and be at his home to-morrow. That makes a great difference in the minds of the people; the fact that there is such free movement backwards and forwards affords a great stimulus to recruitment. Practically all their work is done in four districts, while our work for Assam is scattered over four or five provinces each of which has many districts.

F-4123. *Mr. Cliff*: We have asked many *sardars* why they are not successful in recruiting but have not been able to get an intelligible reply.—Almost every conceivable scheme has been under consideration for increasing the efficiency of the recruiting agency.

F-4124. Have you ever suggested to the tea industry that if conditions were more attractive in Assam they would be likely to get more labourers?—I have made recommendations on that point.

F-4125. And have the Indian tea industry listened to you sympathetically?—Yes, they listened sympathetically.

F-4126. Have they translated that sympathy into practical action?—Yes, undoubtedly.

F-4127. Can you give me an example?—Giving a recruiting bonus to the immigrant himself. That proposal was originally made by Colonel Kennedy and was supported by me; it came from the recruiting side of the industry and was adopted by the Indian Tea Association on our recommendation. That started the coolie not only free from debt but with a little capital in hand.

F-4128. The other day we were at Hunwal Tea Estate, Mariani, just as a party of recruits arrived. We found they had taken 15 or 16 days to come from their homes though the actual train journey appeared to be 8 days. Are there stages at which they are delayed?—We consider it would not be fair to keep coolies, especially women and children, too long in third class carriages, especially during night journeys, so that the journey is broken at points along the line where the coolies get hot meal and a night's rest.

F-4129. *Sir Alexander Murray*: This party came from Jashpur?—(*Colonel Mackay*) I suppose the depot was Ranchi. A man with women and children cannot get from Jashpur in less than 5 days. There are no railways and it probably has to be done on foot. If anyone in that party had been taken ill, that would cause delay.

F-4130. *Mr. Cliff*: Is there accommodation for them at these rest places?—(*Mr. Milligan*) Yes, we have sheds. Gauhati is one of the rest places; we have been re-modelling it for some time now and we hope to get it finished within the course of this year.

F-4131. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Under Mr. King's scheme first class registering officers are to be paid from Rs. 400 rising to Rs. 750, second class registering officers from Rs. 125 to Rs. 275. Do you consider that the type of man you could get for that pay could efficiently perform the duties which you are performing?—(*Colonel Mackay*) No. Where would they get their training? (*Mr. Milligan*) If they are to have the duty of examining emigrants and rejecting unsuitable recruits, we find that men of experience and good standing are essential for that because it is very responsible work.

F-4132. In the statement you have handed in as to the possibility of withdrawing the notification under section 3, you do not touch on the definition of "labourer"?—If you touch on that the whole of Act VI is meaningless, because a labourer is defined as being either a person bound by a labour contract, which no longer exists, or a person registered as such under section 69. As there is no registration under section 69, there is no such thing as a labourer.

F-4133. *The Chairman*: The real question is whether you are now working a corpse which everybody fancies is alive?—I have not the slightest hesitation in saying it is a corpse, and it has only to go to the High Court once to be immediately buried. We have never appealed a case to the High Court; if we had I am quite sure the hopelessness of the legal position would have been pointed out.

F-4134. *Mr. Cliff*: Apart from your organization, how many agencies are recruiting for the Dooars?—There is one big one, the Dooars Tea Company, and there are various representatives of isolated Indian gardens at Lohardaga. How many there are I could not say; they change from year to year. A number of gardens will send down a man to get coolies.

F-4135. Supposing your scheme for the withdrawal of notifications were given effect to, could individual employers recruit?—If the notifications were withdrawn, section 92 would legalize even the action of individual employers. It is only suggested as an experiment to give the tea industry an opportunity to make good its claim that it is able to recruit freely without bringing itself into discredit.

F-4136. But if these notifications regarding area and types of *sardar* that have been issued under section 3 were withdrawn, then I assume anybody could recruit in any way?—Anybody could recruit in any way they pleased, but they would be under the obligation of bringing all their coolies to an appointed place, and that is where there would be a check on them. The question was raised as to whether it would be legal to prescribe registration under the rules other than the registration of section 69. The Bengal Government have actually done so in their latest rules, so that we may take it it would be legal to prescribe registration at these places of accommodation. If you have registration you have an opportunity of a full investigation into the recruiting of the coolie; the remedy for improper recruitment is rejection.

F-4137. There would still be organization?—Yes, the local organization of the Tea Districts Labour Association would remain as it is.

F-4138. Would the individual employer going down to recruit need to have a local agent?—No, not under section 92; local agents are only required under the existing notifications for the supervision of garden *sardars*.

F-4139. Therefore he could go down and send anybody or bring anybody with him to assist him to recruit?—Yes, legally he could.

F-4140. But you think provision could be made under the other sections or under the rules under the sections to have them brought to certain centres for registration?—Yes, that is the only possible check, to see that they all passed through one channel to Assam, and that in the process they are all registered and inspected.

F-4141. Must it be one charmed?—(*Colonel Mackay*) Government lays it down in their manual that there shall be only one registering officer in a district at a time. (*Mr. Milligan*) It would have to be prescribed by rules of the local Government under section 163. If the local Government decided that they did not want a multiplicity of registering officers, and the Tea Districts Labour Association should be entrusted with that function, they would all have to produce their coolies before our local agent, who would register them, and presumably our organization would forward them to Assam. If some employers wanted an independent organization of their own they could be permitted to have it, but they would find that the game was not worth the candle, because they would have to provide dépôts and conform to all the requirements of the rules. The expense would be prohibitive.

F-4142. You would have no control over the amounts paid as advances?—We would not be interested in it.

F-4143. Apparently agencies may be inspected by a Magistrate, the Superintendent of Emigration, the Civil Surgeon, the Chairman of the Assam Labour Board, Supervisors of the Tea Districts Labour Association and Supervisors of the Assam Labour Board?—(*Colonel Mackay*) Yes, and even any policeman above the rank of Sub-Inspector, which is a great grievance of mine; the local Thana Inspector can walk in, examine me and my books and my dépôt. (*Mr. Milligan*) I also have the right of inspection. I submit reports to the Committee. The Supervisors of the Board report to the Chairman of the Board and he sends extracts from their tour notes to us.

F-4144. All that would still go on under this new scheme?—Presumably: it is prescribed by rules of Government and the Assam Labour Board would remain undisturbed by the scheme. Our idea is that there would be no violent departure from the present system, and we would have freedom under the proposed regime to work out a better system gradually. Act VI gives us no chance of experiment at all and that has been our main grievance.

F-4145. *The Chairman*: Do you not think you had better abolish Act VI and all its appendages and try a new Act for India?—If you could give us any guarantee that we would have a new Act of a suitable kind within the next 3 or 4 years, I would gladly agree with your suggestion; but that is the tickle. It is a question of politics.

F-4146. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How many agencies have you in the Tea Districts Labour Association?—Forty-two agencies.

F-4147. I see that in some cases as far as women are concerned there is a right of detention from 3 to 7 days?—(*Colonel Mackay*) That is the standing order of the Association; whether it is a legal order or not; we detain all single women for three days; that means detaining the whole batch, as the men naturally do not wish to go on without their women. (*Mr. Milligan*) It would

be difficult to detain single women and send them up alone after all their friends had gone. (*Colonel Mackay*) The delay affords an opportunity for making enquiries on the part of the local agent or for their relatives to come in and claim them.

F-4148. When the recruits are passed by a doctor, at whose expense is the medical inspection done?—(*Mr. Milligan*) At the expense of the Tea Districts Labour Association or the tea industry. A fee of 8 annas per head is charged.

F-4149. *The Chairman.* What enquiries are made in the case of single women?—(*Colonel Mackay*) We send out peons to the address which the woman herself gives. The peons goes out with a letter to the headman of the village, and he brings back a report as to whether the woman may go, or he comes back with an actual relative of the woman who says she is his wife or daughter who is running away with somebody. She is then taken back. During the last year in about 4,589 emigrants, 21 single women were brought in; after enquiry 9 of them were rejected, and 12 were allowed to go forward, reasons having been shown why they should go forward. That is about the average. Twenty-four minors were brought in, and after due enquiry they were all rejected and taken back to their villages, the receipt of the headman or the father being obtained for them.

F-4150. You feel that your examination of those cases of single women and minors is substantially effective?—It is very thorough not only by myself, but by any other local agents.

F-4151. You feel that applies generally?—Yes.

F-4152. We have had submitted to us a memorandum prepared by the Bishop of Ranchi?—I was local agent in Ranchi and I have read that memorandum.

F-4153. Would you like to say anything on that?—A great deal. The Bishop was not there in my time, but I know most of the other priests, one or two of them being personal friends of mine, though I am not a Roman Catholic. I think he has dished up a lot of ancient history, which is on record in various places in fable and song, and has no personal experience of the matter. I think he came from Patna, an entirely different district where there is no emigration, and he has listened to these wonderful stories. The very Mundari Grammar from which the Priests and others start learning one of the languages of the Ranchi district contains stories in the form of exercises describing the wickedness of coolie recruiters, which keep the old stories alive.

F-4154. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Who was it that rejected this large proportion of women and minors?—The Jubbulpore local agency is under me directly and I have three sub-agencies. Every *sardar* who comes from the garden and every coolie who goes up passes before me personally.

F-4155. *Mr. Cliff*: Are there many Colonel Mackays in the Tea Districts Labour Association?—Quite a number.

F-4156. We have received a letter which appears to be signed "Gupta." Will you look at that and see if you recognize the signature (handing the letter to the witnesses)?—(*Mr. Milligan*) We have only one agent called Gupta, and he is B. N. Gupta. Unfortunately he appears in our books as "Dr. Gupta," no initials being given. When you come to Calcutta we shall be able to make a definite statement. Dr. Gupta is at Cuttack and if he sent out this letter he will be able to explain his reasons for doing so. He will at least tell you it is not authorized by the Association. Our instructions are all contained in our handbook.

F-4157. Do you concur in the advice given in that document?—I do not.

F-4158. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What would be the salary of this Dr. Gupta at Cuttack?—(*Mr. Milligan*) About Rs. 300 or 400 a month. (*Colonel Mackay*) Now that I have looked at the letter, I do not recognize the signature, but I do recognize other things, and I confess I think it is an effusion by a servant of the Tea Districts Labour Association; but it is quite unauthorized. I am ashamed of it. I have never seen such a thing before. (*Mr. Crawford*) The local agents have the right of corresponding direct with managers.

F-4159. *Mr. Cliff*: It appears to be a carbon copy and it may be that more than one manager has received similar advice?—We will go very thoroughly into it at Calcutta. (*Colonel Mackay*) That is one Indian gentleman writing to another. (*Mr. Milligan*) It is dated the 13th November 1928.

F-4160. *Sir Alexander Murray*: I have a note here which says that the local agent is really the agent for the employer of labour, that is the manager, and is bound to keep the manager in touch with everything concerning his *sardars*. Therefore the local agent has the right of direct correspondence with the manager?—(*Colonel Mackay*) Yes, it is a part of his duty to correspond.

F-4161. Then in writing that letter, if he is a local agent, he was acting quite within his rights?—Yes.

F-4162. *Mr. Cliff*: In connection with that you have a number of printed forms on which particulars are sent up to the garden manager with regard to the dependents of labourers who may be recruited and as to whether there is any possibility of further recruiting?—Yes, invariably.

F-4161a. You appear to have some standardized forms with regard to advice of that character?—Yes.

F-4162a. But apart from that standardized form of advice, is that kind of thing encouraged?—We encourage local agents to correspond with and advise managers in every way, but it should be done with discretion and a certain amount of sense.

F-4163. The Chairman said he could take it from the list you handed up that these local agents are people of substance and authority?—Yes.

F-4164. Is the writer of that letter one of the people of substance and authority?—This gentleman is an Indian doctor who has assumed the duties of a local agent. (*Mr. Milligan*) He is at Cuttack which used to be a very important centre. Colonel Mackay was there once and he sent up that large number of recruits which he mentioned. But Cuttack has now become unimportant from the point of view of recruiting. Dr. Gupta combines the functions of doctor and local agent.

F-4165. *The Chairman*: Then he is not whole-time?—Yes, he is our doctor.

F-4166. *Colonel Garbett*: When writing to garden managers do you not send copies of all your correspondence to the secretaries and to the Calcutta agents?—(*Colonel Mackay*) Not in all circumstances, but we send copies in a considerable number of instances.

(The Commission adjourned to Gauhati.)

ASSAM.

Fifty-seventh Meeting.

GAUHATI.

(Held at the Forwarding Agency for the recruitment of Assam Tea Garden labour at Gauhati.)

Sunday, 19th January 1930.

PRESENT:

| | | |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | } | Commissioners. |
| MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. | | |
| REV. THENURAM SAIKIA. | } | Assistant Commissioners. |
| Lt.-COLONEL H. C. GARBETT, Superintendent, Kanjikoah Budla Beta Tea Co., Ltd. | | |
| MRS. ATAUR RAHMAN, <i>Lady Assessor.</i> | | |
| MR. A. DIBBIN, <i>Joint Secretary.</i> | | |

Statement by RASHID (Mussalman), coolie.

I have come from Bakpore in Doom Dooma. I have stayed there for six months, which was the period I agreed to stay. I have got my brother with me and he has two children with him; my brother's children are 2 and 4 years old. Their mother is dead. She died in her country. I am going to stay two months in my country and then I am going back to the tea gardens. I shall come back with any *sardar* who is ready to take me. I have got a brother in my country and if he is willing to come I will bring him. The manager told me to go away for two months. I have got cultivation at my home and my brother is looking after it. I am not going to stay in Ranchi because I cannot get enough to support me. My brother and I have saved Rs. 40, and that will be spent on our living in the next two months. My brother and I get Rs. 13 a month on the garden in Doom Dooma. We used to begin work at 8 o'clock and finish at 4 o'clock. We got no interval for food; we had a meal before we started and a meal after we came back. If we stayed away from work for a day 8 annas was deducted. If we stayed at work we got Rs. 13 a month. The women on the garden also get Rs. 13 a month. People who work in our country get 8 annas a day. I was brought here on false pretences. They told me I would get 10 to 12 annas a day. I do not intend to go back to that same garden; I intend to come back to another one. I shall get more money in another garden. I do not know the name of a garden in which I can get more money, but the *sardar* will tell me the garden at which I can get more money.

(The witness withdrew.)

Statement by SAPTI (Oorya), woman *sardar*.

I am going to Sambhalpur which is my country. I was at Ranjanganj tea garden. I have been 25 years on that garden and my relatives are there. I am taking my son-in-law back with me. I am going as a *sardar* to get coolies. I have been back as a *sardar* four times, including the present time. The first time I brought back four coolies; next time 2, the third time 4 adults and a small child. Once I brought no recruits. I am a widow; my husband died on the gardens. I have one son who was born at my home; he works on the gardens; he is married. I have left my son, my daughter-in-law and my grandchildren on the garden.

On the garden the women get Rs. 7, 8 and 9 per month. I do not now work on the garden. I live in the lines and my children are working on the garden. I get no pension. My son and my daughter-in-law work and I live on that. Some of the other women get a blanket or a cloth; I spoke to the manager about it but he has not given it to me. This year nobody ran away from the garden, but in previous years people have run away. How am I to know why they run away. If a man does not work how can he live and if he does not work will he not be beaten? They are beaten by the *sardars*. They are sometimes beaten with a stick and sometimes with the hands. About 3 or 4 years ago there was a manager who beat the women severely; but he is not there now. The manager who is there now does not do that. When I go away I have got to go and tell the *sardar* that I want leave to go recruiting. On the garden when I want to take one day's leave I do not have to ask permission. If the sahib lets me go the *chowkidar* will not stop me. Without the sahib's permission the *chowkidar* will not let me leave. There are six *chowkidars*.

(The witness withdrew.)

Statement by JALAON (Nagbansi), coolie.

I have come from Daflatli tea garden in Jorhat; I have been there 13 years. I belong to Ranchi district. I have been to Ranchi twice before. I brought back two men the first time, but did not get anybody the second time. The second time all my things were stolen. My clothes and everything else were stolen in Surbuja in the Ranchi district. I will stay there this time for 6 or 7 months. On the tea garden we get 8 annas for the *hazira*. I get about Rs. 2-4 a week. Nobody beats anyone on the garden. I do not know what happens on other gardens. I have stayed on the same garden all the time. If we want to go out of the garden we get permission from the manager. I have not seen people going away without permission. I have left my wife and children in the garden. I have saved nothing. I have got one cow.

(The witness withdrew.)

Statement by BADLU (Chamar), coolie.

I come from Gonda district in Oudh and I am coming now from the Dakia tea garden in Jorhat district. I have been there 7 months. Moti *sardar* of my own district brought me here. He is now on the garden. I am going as a *sardar* now. My wife is on the garden. On the garden I got paid according to the amount of work, I did hoeing. I got from Rs. 1-14 to Rs. 2-4 a week. There are no lazy people on our garden; they all work hard. There may be lazy people in Suikata tea garden. The people in our garden are not beaten when they do not work. When we want to go out for one or two days we get permission from the manager. Nobody ever leaves our garden without getting his name taken off the register. We work at the tea garden by agreement from year to year. I have not taken an agreement for this year. If I took the agreement I should not be allowed to leave. If a man has taken a *girmit* and tries to leave before it has expired the *chowkidar* will try and keep him back, and if the *chowkidar* does not, the Sahib will try and stop him. Nobody runs away from our garden. The conditions are good on our garden. Many run away from the Suikata garden. I left my country because I could not get enough to live on there. The water is very bad on the Suikata garden and the people are in trouble. There is lot of illness on the Suikata garden, but not in our garden. Supposing there are 100 coolies and they want to run away 100 *chowkidars* would be needed to stop them all. In the day time the *chowkidars* are there to look out for them, but at night time the *chowkidar* is not there to look out for them so they run away at night.

(The witness withdrew.)

Statement by BACHAN (Luia), tea garden coolie.

I come from Behraich district. I was 7 months on the tea garden. I went with Badlu and have been working on the same garden. I intend to come back, I am going to my own country to recruit and I may stay one year or a little more. My family is on the garden. Conditions are very good on our garden; the doctor is

a very good one and gives us good medicine. I get from about Rs. 1-8 to Rs. 1-14 a week. It is sufficient to keep us. There are just myself and my wife. There are two *chowkidars* in our line. The *chowkidars*' business is to get people out to work. If the men do not come out to work the *chowkidar* goes and reports it to the office. I do not know what happens in the office. I have saved nothing. I have only been 7 months there and I have not got any cattle. I have just had enough to live on. At Suikata the water is very bad and people do not get enough to eat. People cannot get enough to eat because they are ill very much and cannot work. They are not severely treated on the garden; it is only a question of sickness. Nobody leaves our garden without getting permission. If a man wants to go without permission the *Sahib* will say: "What are you going for. You have come to work on my garden." Nobody has ever run away from our garden.

(The witness withdrew.)

Statement by M. N. BALIAL, agent *baboo*.

On the 13th January I got a telegram from the Manager of the Woodbine Tea Estate to the following effect: "Titia taken child Ramdhona without leave please return from Gauhati." Titia was a woman who arrived here on the 13th January with two sons, Butan and Ramdhona. Butan was grown up while Ramdhona was about 7 years of age. Titia and Butan had *sardar*'s licenses. On receipt of the telegram I asked them whether she would allow me to return Ramdhona to the garden. Titia and her son Butan said they would prefer returning to the garden all of them rather than proceeding without Ramdhona. I cannot say why they could not proceed without Ramdhona. When Titia and the others learnt that they were all to go back to the garden Butan and Titia said they would go to the recruiting district and allow Ramdhona to be sent back to the garden. Then I sent Ramdhona back in charge of a peon and the other two were forwarded to Luckeesarai. It is very rarely that I get instructions from the manager to stop people. I asked the woman and she said that she had other relatives on the garden.

F-4167. *Mr. Clow*: If people come here without certificates what do you do?—Sometimes relatives come with the *sardars* who hold certificates; sometimes that happens with the permission of the garden managers; sometimes a husband has got a recruiting license and he is taking his wife with him to the recruiting district with the permission of the garden manager.

F-4168. What happens if coolies come without the permission of the manager?—Then I refer it to the manager for instructions.

F-4169. *Colonel Garbett*: And what does the manager say?—He says: "That woman does not wish to go to the recruiting district leaving that boy; then return both of them to the garden." I told the woman this and she said: "You had better send that boy with a peon of your own to the garden and let me go to the recruiting district."

F-4170. *Mr. Clow*: That woman complained on Wednesday that that boy had been beaten on the garden?—No, she did not complain.

F-4171. Where is the boy's father?—I did not ask about that but the woman said that the boy had other relatives on the garden.

F-4172. She did not say where the father was?—No, I did not ask that. She agreed to go to Luckeesarai, the recruiting district, and allow me to send the boy back. I said "Are there other relatives there, and she said yes.

(The witness withdrew.)

Statement by SAMUJ (Chamar), coolie, going to Assam.

I have not been on a garden before. Moti Lal *sardar* recruited me. He is not here. A *chaprasi* brought me from my district. I come from Basti district. I am going for 6 months. I came here because I wanted to. My *sardar* told me I could earn from 8 annas to a rupee per day as I wished. I do not know the name of the garden to which I am going; I do not know what district it is in. The *sardar* was a Lunia. I have left my family behind in my village at Rampur. I do not intend to leave my country for good. I have a brother, a father and a

mother left behind to look after the fields. I have been told I shall get Rs. 10 when I reach the garden. I have got a *thuli* (plate) and a *lota* (pot), two blankets, a *dhoti* and a loin cloth.

(The witness withdrew.)

Statement by PARBATI (Chamar), woman coolie and a number of other coolies.

I am going with my husband and three children to Barburwa tea garden in Dibrugarh. I have not been to the tea gardens before; none of us have been before. We left Panna State because conditions were bad. The fields are entirely dry and we have had three very bad years and so we have left. I do not know what I shall get on the gardens. We have been promised that we shall get 5 or 6 annas a day, and when there is no work we shall get an allowance. There are 44 of us here who have come from the same place. Lalli *sardar* has sent us and he is still in the country. This is the twelfth day we have been on the journey. We have not the least idea at what station we should get out. We seem to be all the time in trains and getting out of trains. We are going for a year; we shall not stay longer than a year. There are 9 adults and 9 children of us who are related. I was told there was lots of work and lots of money to be got on the tea garden; I was told that I would get 8 annas and upwards whatever the work. Whether I shall get it I do not know; I should be able to find out when I get there. I have been told I shall have to do hoeing and plucking leaves. I have been told that the plucking will be paid according to the weight of the leaves, but that we shall get daily money for that work, while we shall be paid a fixed rate for hoeing. At Jubbulpore we were all vaccinated and inoculated. The doctor examined us thoroughly.

(The witness withdrew. The Commission adjourned.)

DOOARS.

Fifty-eighth Meeting.

(Held at Baradighi Tea Estate).

Monday, 20th January 1930.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (*Chairman*).

SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. DIWAN CHAMAN LALL, M.L.A.

MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. MISS B. M. LE POER POWER.

MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. LT.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E., I.M.S.

MR. JOHN CLIFF. (*Medical Assessor*).

MR. S. LALL, I.C.S.

MR. A. DIBBIN.

} *Joint Secretaries.*

BARSI, wife of Ledwa, coolie, ITWARI, wife of Lachman coolie and
two other women coolies (Mr. Lall interpreted).

F-4173. *Miss Power*: How long have you been on the garden?—I was a little girl when I came to this garden.

F-4174. Where did you come from?—I do not know.

F-4175. Is your husband working on the garden?—Yes.

F-4176. How are you paid for your task?—I am paid Rs. 4 a month. (Another woman) I am paid Rs. 48 a month. That is for one *hazira* a day. I work every day except Sundays.

F-4177. How many hours does it take you to do a *hazira*?—The first *hazira* begins at about 8 and ends by 12.

F-4178. Do you all agree that it ends at 12?—About 12.

F-4179. How are you fetched out to work?—The bell rings at 8.

F-4180. Do you have to turn out when the bell rings?—Yes.

F-4181. Supposing you do not, what happens?—If we go late we are turned back.

F-4182. Does that mean you cannot do your *hazira* at all if you turn out late?—That means we lose our day's *hazira*.

F-4183. If you lose your day's *hazira*, cannot you do any *ticca* either?—We have got to do the *ticca* also; if we do not do the *ticca* we are not paid even for the *hazira*.

F-4184. How much *ticca* do you do?—We have got to prune 72 trees.

F-4185. Is that light pruning?—Yes.

F-4186. How much do you get for that?—Three annas a day.

F-4187. Do you earn that *ticca* every day, 6 days in the week?—Yes, unless I do *ticca* I shall not get paid for my *hazira*.

F-4188. *Mr. Cliff*: Do you go home at 12 and then come back?—They do not all come back. We come back.

F-4189. *Miss Power*: Does another bell go in the afternoon?—No.

F-4190. No bell goes for *ticca*?—No.

F-4191. Does that mean that you return when you like for the *ticca*?—Yes, we return when we like.

F-4192. I take it you have to do the *ticca* or you are not paid for the *hazira*, but you can go and do it when you like in the afternoon?—If we do *hazira* and do not follow it up with the *ticca* we are not paid anything.

F-4193. What about the *girmi* at the end of the year?—There is no *girmi*.

F-4194. Are you all living in the lines on the garden?—We live on the garden in the houses which have been built by the manager.

F-4195. Does the *sardar* treat you well; what does he do if he thinks your work is not good?—If we do not work well we are marked absent.

F-4196. Do you mean that if the *sardar* does not think your work is well done, he will not let you be paid for it?—The *sardar* reports us to the *Sahib* and we are marked absent.

F-4197. Do you all agree about that?—Yes.

F-4198. Have any of you ever done a day's *hazira* and not been paid for that because of a fault?—There are many who do not get paid for a *hazira*. Sometimes we get Rs. 2 a month instead of Rs. 4-8 because we have been cut the *hazira*.

F-4199. Is that because of bad work?—Either because of bad work or because we have not followed the *hazira* by *ticca*.

F-4200. Does the *sardar* ever strike you?—Never. (Another woman) No, we are not beaten on the garden.

F-4201. *Mr. Cliff*: Do you buy *dhan* and do you husk it?—We buy *dhan*, not rice.

F-4202. Do you husk it yourself?—Yes.

F-4203. How long does it take you to husk *dhan*?—We husk 12 seers at a time; and it takes us about three or four hours.

F-4204. Is it easy?—We invite you to come and try it. We use a heavy piece of wood.

F-4205. Do you get 12 seers for a week?—For a family, 12 seers lasts 2 or 3 days.

F-4206. What is the price at present?—It is 8 seers for the rupee now.

F-4207. Do you wear these silver ornaments always?—I wear them round my neck every day when I go to work.

F-4208. *Miss I'over*: How many days in a month do you lose because the *sardar* says your work is not good?—We are cut for that, but we two during the last two months have not been cut because we have been consistently doing good work.

F-4209. Who decides that you have not done good work?—The *sardar* reports. (The witnesses withdrew.)

BHIRSA, son of Mangra, boy coolie.

F-4210. *Mr. Cliff*: Are you working?—Yes.

F-4211. How old are you?—I do not know.

Mr. Lall: I should think he is between 10 and 12 years old.

F-4212. *Mr. Cliff*: Have you been working long?—I have been working three years.

F-4213. Will you prune that bush? (the boy pruned a bush).

F-4214. Is that bush finished?—Yes.

F-4215. How much do you get?—For 72 of these bushes I get three annas.

F-4216. How long do you work on 72 bushes?—Sometimes we start in the morning and go on till 12, 1 and 2 o'clock, and then we go.

F-4217. Do you then go home for some food?—Yes.

F-4218. Do you come back?—I finish about 1 and come back about 2.

F-4219. And then when do you finish?—At 5 o'clock.

F-4220. How much do you get then?—I get 3 annas in the morning and 3 annas in the afternoon, that is 6 annas a day.

F-4221. Do your mother and father send you to work?—Yes.

F-4222. Do you give your father and mother the money?—I give it to my mother.

F-4223. Have you ever been to school?—No.

F-4224. Is there a school in the garden?—Yes, but I do not go there.

F-4225. Do you understand what pictures mean?—I cannot read and I cannot follow any pictures.

F-4226. Do you want to try to learn?—I do not want to learn.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

SURAJMONI (Santhal caste), wife of Goolia, BARSI (Gorait caste), wife of Lakhan, two women coolies.

F-4227. *Miss Power*: Where do you come from?—I come from Chakradharpur.

F-4228. How long have you been working on the garden?—I have been many years on this garden.

F-4229. What time do you come in the morning?—We come very early in the morning.

F-4230. Do you come when the bell rings?—I come here in the morning before the bell rings; I work here and then go for my meal and then come back and work till it is dark.

F-4231. How much do you get for the *hazira*?—Three annas a day.

F-4232. How long does it take to do the *hazira*?—It takes till 12 o'clock or a little later, perhaps till 3 o'clock. Those who are good at the work finish the *hazira* at 12 o'clock and those who are not good at it finish the *hazira* at 3 o'clock.

F-4233. Do you have to do *ticca* as well?—We have to do *ticca* and if we do not do *ticca* we do not get our *hazira*. We earn 3 annas for *ticca* also. We get 6 annas a day if we do *hazira* and *ticca*.

F-4234. What does the *sardar* do if your work is not good?—If we do not do good work we do not get money for it.

F-4235. Are you beaten?—We are not beaten. If our work is not good we are not paid for either the *hazira* or the *ticca*.

F-4236. Who decides whether your work is good or not?—The man, whom you told to go away, (*sardar*) decides.

F-4237. Does he fetch the *Sahib* to see bad work?—He reports it to the *Sahib*, but the *Sahib* does not himself come to see it.

F-4238. Does that happen very often?—Two or three days in the month my *hazira* is cut.

F-4239. How much do you lose?—(The second woman) I was cut my *hazira* on four days.

F-4240. What happens when you do not feel well enough to come to work?—We get medicine but we get nothing else.

F-4241. If you are ill and go to the garden doctor do you get any pay?—We get medicine but no payment. Medicine is free.

F-4242. Have you got a child?—Yes. When a child is born we get Rs. 5 *bakshis* for each child.

F-4243. *Miss Power*: Were you paid when you were off work?—We only get Rs. 5 *bakshis*.

F-4244. Are you given special light work?—No, we do the same work.

F-4245. *Mr. Cliff*: Where do you go to buy your cloth?—We buy it from the *hat*.

F-4246. How much do you pay for that cloth?—The *sari* which I am wearing cost Rs. 2. I require 4 or 5 *saris* in a year.

F-4247. *Miss Power*: Are you all in your best clothes to-day?—We put on all our jewels when we come here because we dare not leave them in the house; they might be stolen. I myself cannot afford jewels, but others who can afford them wear them all the time.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

**A party of men coolies returning from work at 11-7 o'clock
(standard time).**

F-4248. *Mr. Cliff*: Have you finished your work?—Yes.

F-4249. What time did you start?—6 o'clock.

F-4250. Before the bell?—Much before the bell.

F-4251. How much have you earned?—Four annas. We shall come back here.

F-4252. How long will you work then?—Till dark.

F-4253. How much will you get then?—We earn 8 annas a day; 4 annas in the morning and 4 annas in the afternoon. If we do not come in the afternoon and do our *ticca* we lose our *hazira*.

F-4254. Do you lose your pay if you do not do good work?—The *dafadar* cuts our wages if we do bad work.

F-4255. How many days do you have cut in a month?—I have not been cut yet. (Another coolie) I was cut three days for bad work in a month. (A third coolie) I did not work for the whole month. (A fourth coolie) I have not been cut. (A fifth coolie) I lost two days for bad work.

F-4256. Do you work every day?—We work 6 days every week.

F-4257. Do you work in the rains?—Yes.

F-4258. *Miss Power*: Are you paid if you do not go out when the bell rings?—We work in a gang, and the *sardar* is the man who sees that we come. If I do not work regularly the *sardar* will not be prepared to advance me money from time to time when I need it. The *sardar* advances money and if we do not work regularly the *sardar* stops making the advances.

F-4259. *Mr. Cliff*: Do you get your wages weekly?—The *hazira* is paid monthly, but the *ticca* is paid weekly.

F-4260. What do you want advances for?—We want it to buy our food, etc.

F-4261. Would it not be better if you were paid your *hazira* weekly and then you would not want advances?—If we got our *hazira* weekly we should not have to borrow, but if we fall ill we should still have to borrow.

F-4262. When you are ill and have to go to the doctor, do you not get any money from the *Sahib*?—No, we do not get anything.

F-4263. I suppose you men do not allow the *sardar* to hit you?—No, the *sardar* does not beat us, but those who deserve it get it.

F-4264. Do you mean that some men do get beaten by the *sardar*?—The *sardar* unless provoked never beats us.

F-4265. *Miss Power*: Do you mean that if you do not do good work he beats you?—When we are very guilty we are beaten.

F-4266. Do you mean guilty of bad work?—It is not for bad work but for abusing any worker or for bad behaviour.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

**ABIRAM (Munda) of Chota Nagpur (Ranchi), coolie in the
Baradighi Tea Estate.**

F-4267. *Mr. Clow*: How long have you been working in this estate?—For the last three years.

F-4268. Who brought you here?—Linga, who is a *sardar*, working on this estate brought me here.

F-4269. Why did you leave Ranchi?—I could not get enough there.

F-4270. Have you any of your relations here?—I have my wife, and I paid Rs. 100 for the marriage.

F-4271. To whom did you pay that amount?—To the parents of the girl.

F-4272. Where did you get the amount from?—I had Rs. 80 of my own, and I borrowed the balance from the manager. The instalments are cut from my wages.

F-4273. How much do you still owe to the manager?—Rs. 15.

F-4274. When did you borrow the amount?—Two years ago.

F-4275. Have you any children?—No; I am expecting one.

F-4276. Does your wife also work?—Yes.

F-4277. What are you paid?—I am paid 4 annas for the *hazira*.

F-4278. How long have you to work to earn that?—Up to 1 o'clock.

F-4279. When do you come to work in the morning?—At 8. I do 115 *dings* by 1 o'clock. (*Ding* is the distance between one bush and the next.)

F-4280. Do you do any *doubli*?—Yes, if time permits. I go home at 1 o'clock and after taking my meals I come back to the garden to work. I work until the sun goes down.

F-4281. What did you do yesterday?—Yesterday was a holiday.

F-4282. On Saturday what did you do?—I did only one *hazira*.

F-4283. Did you do *ticca* on Saturday?—No. I did some *ticca* on Friday.

F-4284. Is the *ticca* paid weekly or monthly?—Weekly.

F-4285. How much is cut from your pay towards the loan?—One rupee a month.

F-4286. Do you intend going back to Ranchi?—Yes, when I have money.

F-4287. Had you ever been ill?—No.

(The witness withdrew.)

SULEMAN. (Munda) (from Ranchi), a coolie in the Baradighi Tea Estate.

F-4288. *Mr. Chow*: How long are you working here?—For the last 12 or 13 years.

F-4289. Have you your wife here?—Yes.

F-4290. Have you any children?—No.

F-4291. Have you any other relations living here?—No. I have a brother who is living in my village.

F-4292. Is your father living?—No.

F-4293. Why did you leave Ranchi?—I came here because of hunger; I was not getting enough at my place.

F-4294. What do you get here?—I get Rs. 6-12 a month, and Rs. 1-8 a week for the *doubli*.

F-4295. How much work have you done to-day?—I have finished one *hazira*, or 100 *dings*.

F-4296. Have you taken any advance?—I have borrowed Rs. 12 from the *sardar*.

F-4297. When did you borrow?—Two years ago.

F-4298. Do you pay any interest?—No.

F-4299. Why did you borrow?—For the purchase of *dhun*.

F-4300. Have you not returned the money?—No.

F-4301. Why not?—I have no money to pay. I am working for the *sardar*.

F-4302. Does your wife work?—Yes.

F-4303. What did she earn last month?—She earned Rs. 6-2.

(The witness withdrew.)

**RAKIYA (of Pailkot, Ranchi), a coolie in the Baradighi
Tea Estate.**

F-4304. *Mr. Clow*: How long have you been here?—I have been here for many years; I came when the garden was opened.

F-4305. Did you work on any garden before you came here?—I came as a young boy to Baradighi and I have worked always on it.

F-4306. Have you ever gone to your village?—I used to go every year as *sardar*, but this year I have sent my boy.

F-4307. Did you go last year?—Yes.

F-4308. Did you bring any coolies?—I brought nine coolies.

F-4309. Did you get any reward for bringing them?—Three of them stayed on the garden, and I got a reward of Rs. 5 for each of them. The remaining six have gone back as *sardars* and when they return I shall get my reward.

F-4310. Who gave you the reward?—The manager.

F-4311. What is your pay?—Rs. 6 a month for one *hazira*.

F-4312. What do you get for the *doubli*?—I get 4 annas a day.

F-4313. Have you finished your first *hazira* to-day?—Yes, I have just finished it (11-30 a.m.). I am now going to get my *doubli*.

F-4314. When did you come this morning?—I came at 6 o'clock. Some mornings I come early and some mornings I do not. I came just after sunrise.

F-4315. When do you get your *doubli* paid?—I am paid weekly; I get Rs. 1-8 a week.

F-4316. Have you any fields?—I have half a *bigha*.

F-4317. Have you any cows?—No.

F-4318. Have you any bullocks?—No.

F-4319. How do you plough the land?—I get somebody else's plough.

F-4320. Have you saved any money?—I have about Rs. 4.

F-4321. Who pays your fare when you go to your country?—I pay it out of my own pocket, and when I get there it is refunded to me.

(The witness withdrew.)

**Mr. G. L. HAIG, (Chairman), Mr. W. L. TRAVERS, C.I.E., O.B.E.,
M.L.C., and Dr. O. McCUTCHEON, M.B. (Secretary), represen-
tatives of the Dooars Planters' Association.**

F-4322. *The Chairman*: Is the Dooars Planters' Association independent or is it a branch of the Indian Tea Association?—(*Mr. Travers*) It is independent.

F-4323. Are there Indian members?—A good many Indian planters are members and they are represented on the Committee.

F-4324. What area is covered by your organization; do you go as far as Darjeeling?—No, it is purely the Dooars. In the Jalpaiguri district there are one or two gardens outside the district.

F-4325. How many gardens are represented?—128 gardens are represented with an acreage of over 120,000.

F-4326. Is not the Dooars Planters' Association a member of the Indian Tea Association?—No. We work in co-operation but we are an independent body.

F-4327. In the memorandum you have submitted to us, you say you approved generally of the memorandum submitted by the Indian Tea Association, but you desire to make certain other points?—The memorandum of the Indian Tea Association consists to a large extent of figures and facts incidental to

the industry. It did not seem to me to give the Commission any idea of the general life of the coolie; so I wrote an account of the life of the labourer. The general body of the Dooars Planters' Association Committee agree with that memorandum, which I have submitted. (Mr. Haig) I submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner and that is incorporated in the memorandum of the Bengal Government.

F-4328. Mr. Travers, I understand you are Manager of the Baradighi Tea Estate where we now are?—(Mr. Travers) Yes. I am also Inspector of the Tea Gardens of Messrs. Jardine Skinner & Co., covering 24 gardens. I was for 6 years Chairman of the Dooars Planters' Association, and for a good many years after that Vice-Chairman. I have also been for 11 years their representative on the Legislative Council.

F-4329. Dr. McCutcheon, I think you supervise the medical arrangements of a number of gardens under different agencies?—(Dr. McCutcheon) Yes, 15 gardens, all in this immediate neighbourhood. There are 8 British medical officers in the Dooars and one Superior Indian medical officer, engaged by a group of Indian gardens. There are 8 medical circles. We are divided into 6 districts, more or less geographically by rivers and each medical officer has a group of gardens.

F-4330. Statistically how do you deal with still-births?—I generally direct that still births shall be kept separate, neither entered as births nor deaths. That is generally done, but I cannot say that the returns as to still births are accurate.

F-4331. Do the other medical officers follow the same practice?—I think they do more or less.

F-4332. Is there any instruction from Government on that point?—None at all. Under the Act I cannot find any instruction.

F-4333. What are your respective terms of experience of tea plantations?—(Mr. Travers) I have been out here for 30 years. (Dr. McCutcheon) My experience is 32 years. (Mr. Haig) I have been out 26 years.

F-4334. With regard to recruitment you are not affected by Acts VI and XIII?—(Mr. Travers) No. The labour emigration into this district has never been under any restrictions at all as far as Government is concerned and the labourers have been under no agreement. We ourselves have instituted a certain amount of supervision on our own behalf. For instance, years ago, we found that a number of married girls were coming up who were running away from their husbands. Now no married women are allowed to come up without their husbands and no unmarried women without the permission of their fathers and mothers. That is an entirely voluntary restriction which we have through the Tea Districts Labour Association.

F-4335. Have you agents?—The larger number of British gardens recruit through the Tea Districts Labour Association. In Chota Nagpur, which is the district from which the majority of our coolies come, we have a separate agent, but in the other districts they come through the same agents as recruits for Assam.

F-4336. As the Assam restrictions do not affect you, you appear to have a substantial advantage?—Yes.

F-4337. And the journey to some extent is shorter?—That is so.

F-4338. How many days does it take to bring up your workers?—By rail it would take 2½ to 3 days.

F-4339. How do you stand with regard to the supply of workers?—At the present time the majority of the gardens in the Dooars have a sufficient supply.

F-4440. Can you give us round figures as to the vacancies to be filled and your percentage of loss?—We have left it to the Indian Tea Association to deal with that. The migration varies, according to the conditions in Chota Nagpur in regard to the harvest and the pressure on the land.

F-4441. Is there any great difference between your conditions here and those in Assam as to the number of people who come as settlers?—Until the great influenza epidemic in 1919 the whole of the Dooars labour supply came from Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas, whereas Assam got their labour from a very much wider area. In 1919 Chota Nagpur was so severely affected by influenza that we could not obtain sufficient labour from there, and for a while we had to go further afield. We went to Madras, and we brought a number of Madrasis here, and a certain number from the Central Provinces. Since then the population of Chota Nagpur has enormously increased and

we are again getting the large majority of our coolies from Chota Nagpur and less and less from Madras and the Central Provinces. I should think that at present nineteen-twentieth of our coolies are coming from Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas.

F-4442. How much of your recruitment is done through the Tea Districts Labour Association and how much privately?—There is one considerable European Company, the Dooars Tea Company, with 8 gardens which recruits outside the Tea Districts Labour Association and I think the majority of the Indian gardens have their own recruiting organization. All the other European gardens are under the Tea District Labour Association.

F-4443. We find that last year 32,000 souls were recruited for the Dooars through the Tea Districts Labour Association, how many *sardars* were engaged in that recruiting?—A number of coolies take passes to permit them to recruit but do not recruit at all, so that in the Dooars there is very little relation between the number of recruiters and the number of coolies who come back. Any respectable coolie who asks for a pass gets it; that provides him with a free passage both ways.

F-4444. Why is there any need for a pass?—Because they want to come back at our expense. After they have returned to Chota Nagpur if they show the pass to the recruiting agent there he will send them back at the cost of the garden to which they are going.

F-4445. It is really a return ticket?—Yes. (Mr. Haig) We pay no commission to the Tea Districts Labour Association when these recruiters come back; we have to pay a commission on newly-recruited coolies.

F-4446. In the Dooars Planters' Association have you an agreement as to a standard rate of payment to your workers?—There is an understood agreement that we shall not go beyond a certain limit, but there is no formal agreement; the present understanding is that we shall not raise the rate of wages, but there is practically no limit as to the earnings that we may allow a coolie to make. There is a sort of basic understanding.

F-4447. Then the understanding is that 4 annas shall be paid for the *hazira*?—We pay 4 annas for the men's *hazira* and 3 annas for the women; that is the sort of rate. A garden may give 2, 3, 4 or 5 *haziras* to enable the coolies to earn what the management of the garden think fit.

F-4448. Is there any agreement with regard to enticement of labour from one garden to another?—The Dooars Planters' Labour rules provide this. If a garden labourer has absconded, from one garden to another, they provide for the return of any balances which such labourer may owe to the garden in respect of borrowings and they provide for compensation for the cost of recruitment of any new coolies within 18 months after their arrival in this district.

F-4449. Just now you used the word "abscond." What do you mean by that?—The chief reason for coolies in the Dooars leaving one garden and going to another is superstition. These people are animistic, and when there is illness they put it down to the work of an evil spirit, and leave one garden and go to another in order to get out of the range of that evil spirit. (Mr. Haig) "Absconding" is the word that is usually used when a coolie goes away from a garden. That is the word used in our labour rules.

F-4450. We found the same word used in Assam. If your labourers are absolutely free to come and go, "absconding" is a curious term?—(Mr. Haig) Possibly we have borrowed the term from Assam. The tea planter as a rule is not very highly educated. If we had known we were to be examined before a Royal Commission as to the use of that word, it is possible that we should have used a different word.

F-4451. Have you any indigenous population around your gardens who work in the gardens?—Many of our coolies have been so long in the district that they may be termed indigenous, having been here perhaps two or three generations. The only people who work on the tea gardens are the coolies and ex-coolies. The people of the district do not work at all. In fact the original inhabitants of the Dooars have disappeared as civilization has advanced. A few of them in the far east who are Christianised do occasionally work on the gardens but not as a general rule.

F-4452. In Assam it was suggested that they did not like being called coolies?—(Mr. Travers) I myself always speak of them as "labourers."

F-4453. You have told us that there is an understanding amongst the gardens in this district as to the rate of payment for the *hazira*?—Yes.

F-4454. When we were talking to your workers in the garden this morning, we were not quite sure as to the method in which payment is made for the *hazira* and in what cases payment can be withheld?—Payment is never withheld. The great majority of my people prefer that their first *hazira* should be paid to them once a month. Their second and third *hazira* and the women's extra pice which they get in the plucking season are paid to them once a week. They prefer that method of payment. Amongst these people the women keep the purse. The Munda and Santhal women run the household. She prefers this method of payment. The weekly payment is sufficient to keep them going in their weekly bazaar, for food, and so on. The monthly payment enables them to buy clothes and save if they want to save. They prefer that system; I have offered them weekly payment but they do not want it; the women say they do not want weekly payment because their husbands would spend too much money on drink. Drink is one of our great difficulties.

F-4455. On your garden do people work one *hazira* and no more?—Quite a number do. The amount of work they wish to do depends upon the time of year. At this time of year the men do not want to work in the afternoon. Two *haziras* is all they want to do. We should give them a third if they wanted it, but they do not want it. As a rule 80 to 90 per cent. of the men who do the first *hazira* do the second. Ten to 20 per cent. do their first *hazira* only, go to their houses or go off to *shikar*, and so on.

F-4456. If they wish is it open to them to do only one *hazira*?—Certainly; they can do exactly as they like. They can do one *hazira* or two *haziras* or any number they like.

F-4457. What is your method of discipline for bad work?—Language; that is all. About once a month I send one or two men home. They are men whom I have warned previously and who persist in doing bad work. I do that as an example. My assistants do not do that, it is only permitted to be done by myself.

F-4458. And then they do not get payment for that day?—No.

F-4459. That is really your method of discipline?—Yes. As a matter of fact we do our discipline by chaff, by persuasion, and so on.

F-4460. To maintain a sufficiently high standard of work in all undertakings it is necessary to have some method of discipline or inducement or whatever it is called?—Quite so.

F-4461. What method do you adopt?—Ordinarily if a man is doing bad work he is made to do it again; that is primarily the duty of the Indian staff. Then I myself or my assistants go through. If my assistants find a man doing bad work they bring him back and he again does that part of the work which is bad; that is all.

F-4462. Is the same method adopted with regard to the women doing pruning?—Yes, these people give very little trouble. It is not more than once a month that I have to find fault.

F-4463. And the punishment is that if really bad work is done, there is no payment for that day's work?—Yes, on the rare occasions on which it occurs; I do not think it happens more than once a month.

F-4464. Are schools available on all the gardens in the Dooars?—I think in the large majority of British gardens there are. In some gardens owing to the difficulties of getting a teacher and so on, the school is not continued for a time. Years ago when I was Chairman of the Association I was instrumental, through the Director of Public Instruction in Bengal, in bringing this system of tea garden schools into operation.

F-4465. From the supplementary memorandum which you have submitted to us I gather that you had endeavoured by persuasion to get children to attend school?—Yes.

F-4466. But you are faced with the difficulty that they are to their parents potential earners of wages?—Yes.

F-4467. You have not tried any form of inducement to go to school other than the mere provision of school houses and teachers?—We are in a very difficult position, because we cannot go beyond what is happening in Chota Nagpur where the standard of education is very low and where there appears to be very little done with regard to extending education. If in Chota Nagpur they will go further we shall be glad to go further.

F-4468. Do you not think you might go just a little ahead?—We are now ahead in giving the means on every garden for education and in trying to persuade them to utilize it.

F-4469. Has your Association ever considered devising a different kind of medical education based on life in the tea garden?—We have considered those points, but we thought it was useless for us to bring in any larger scheme at present because the Primary Education Bill is now before the Legislative Council and has been to a Committee. That Bill will provide a District School Board. The tea gardens will have to pay a double cess, the landlord cess and the tenant cess. We cannot do much until that Bill has been dealt with by the Legislative Council.

F-4470. *Mr. Clow*: What are the rates of wages?—In 1929 the average monthly pay for the year amounts to the following: Men—Rs. 14-4-1, women—Rs. 10-5-8, children—Rs. 2-14-5. That includes all direct earnings, all cash earnings.

F-4471. How many recruiters did you send last year?—I should imagine about 51.

F-4472. How many recruits did they bring back?—About 153.

F-4473. Does that 51 recruiters include those who went with certificates but who had no express intention of bringing back recruits?—That includes the whole number. We sent 51 recruiters in the cold weather before that.

F-4474. So that that 51 represents all those who during the year re-visited Chota Nagpur?—Yes. Of course some of them went simply to see their own people.

F-4475. Have you here any labourers with experience of Assam?—Yes, I have a few labourers who earlier in life have been to Assam; but generally the labourer goes back to the same tea garden or where he is known and where his friends are. Owing to superstition there is of course a considerable movement of labour.

F-4476. There may be a number of coolies who go from one garden to another owing to causes more tangible than evil spirits?—Yes, they have quarrels in the lines.

F-4477. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Do they ever associate the evil spirit with the manager?—No, fortunately not. Foolish superstitions as to the necessity of sacrificing somebody when a new building is erected are sometimes found among the coolies.

F-4478. *Mr. Clow*: What are the factors which make one garden attractive and another unattractive?—Position, price of paddy, grazing, shikar.

F-4479. Would healthiness or otherwise be a factor?—Yes. The character of the Sahib and a variety of other things may be factors.

F-4480. Are the conditions more or less uniform in respect of work?—Yes, competition ensures that. Here the hoeing is very light and very easy but 20 miles to the north there is the red clay soil where the coolie's task is about half of what the task is here, though even then on this soil the task is easier. (*Mr. Haig*) One of my gardens is on red soil and the task is only two-thirds what it is on the lighter soil. (*Mr. Travers*) If a garden gave tasks which were above the average and proportionately too hard, the labour would very speedily go.

F-4481. Do all the gardens have land which the labourers can cultivate?—No, not all of them by any means.

F-4482. What is your proportion here?—I have about 200 acres of *khet* here, the large proportion of which I bought during the last five years.

F-4483. How many acres have you under tea?—There are nearly 1,100 acres under tea. Of course the tea land cannot be used for *khet* because *khet* land must be low-lying and must have water.

F-4484. What system do you follow in allotting the *khet* land?—We give a piece of land to a householder or a *sardar* to help him with his family.

F-4485. How long normally would a new man have to wait before he got any *khet* land?—If a man works for four months regularly and is a respectable person and asks for *khet* land he would get it. I admit I have not enough *khet* land; I want another 100 acres; I am trying to buy more.

F-4486. On your garden what proportion does the daily attendance bear to the working strength?—The total population of Baradighi at the present

moment, men, women and children, is 2,957—2,094 are on the roll of workers. For October the average working strength was 1,285.

F-4487. Is that a typical month?—The number varies. In December it was 999. They are cutting paddy then. In November it was 1,216, October 1,285, September 1,340, August, when they are planting *dhan*, 1,182, July 1,250, June 1,082, April is one of the highest months of the year, that is 1,355.

F-4488. May we take that proportion as more or less typical for the Dooars? Yes.

F-4489. Is there always as much work as a man wishes to do?—Yes.

F-4490. At times are you compelled to refuse work to people who wish to work?—No; there is always enough. We can always find improvement work.

F-4491. *The Chairman*: Can a man turn out for work even if his *sardar* has not turned out?—Yes, it has nothing to do with that. The *haziras* are written up by the Bengali staff. In the Dooars the *sardar* is the headman who looks after the other coolies; they work under his name and he gets a commission on them. Otherwise he has nothing to do with them except that if they want their advances for a day or two before pay day they may come and borrow from him. The *sardar* in the Dooars is quite different from the *sardar* in Assam.

F-4492. Why does he get a commission on the extra work?—The *sardar* here is generally an oldish man; his coolies are in a sense his own people and consequently he looks after them.

F-4493. Does he get a commission from you?—Yes, from the garden; it has nothing to do with the coolies' pay.

F-4494. Therefore it is to his interest to get the maximum amount of work done?—It is.

F-4495. I suppose that is one of your ways of getting the amount of work done that you want?—Yes. This garden has never been short of labour. On a garden where they were short of labour and the coolies were not working well, the managers would enquire from the *sardar* why the coolies were not working and find out whether they had any grievance. If there is any grievance or sickness it is the duty of the *sardar* to tell the management.

F-4496. *Mr. Clow*: How many labourers are there under one *sardar*?—That depends upon the personality of the *sardar*. In this garden some *sardars* have 50 or 60 coolies, while some only have 10. A few *sardars* have as many as 100 coolies under them.

F-4497. You have a system of reducing the task for the second *hazira* and so on?—Yes.

F-4498. By what proportion is it reduced?—That varies according to the state of the soil, whether it is clean or not, and the difficulties of the work. At the present time I expect my people will be doing 15 *luggies* or *nals*, deep hoeing, for their first *hazira*. A *nal* is 12 ft. long.

F-4499. Is it a specified number of bushes?—They estimate it in that way, but it is all in relation to 12 ft.

F-4500. Some of the coolies who talked to us seemed to think it consisted of 7 bushes?—Yes, that would be about right (3 *luggies*). They get 16 for their first *hazira* and 14 for their second *hazira*. When they are doing light hoeing in the rainy season they get perhaps 28 or 30 *nals* for their first *hazira*, 25 for the second, and 22 for the third.

F-4501. Is the second task, which they call *doulli*, normally of the same character as the first?—Exactly the same, deep hoeing to start with.

F-4502. *Miss Power*: When we were questioning some of the women this morning in two separate groups so that one group could not overhear what the other group had said, we were given certain statements about the method of payment which seemed to vary from what you were saying just now. We gathered from both those groups that the women came on to the field in the morning for their *hazira* more or less when the bell rang. They implied that when it was desired that *ticca* should be done they had to do it or they did not get paid for the *hazira*?—That is due to the fact that they did not understand your questions. You must remember that Hindustani is a foreign language to these people. The women prefer to do their first *hazira* and then go home. They go out again at 2 o'clock and do 2½ hours of the second *hazira*. They can do one or two *haziras* exactly as they like. The women have their work to do in the house and with the exception of the single women they do not work with the same regularity as the men.

F-4503. They were asked what happened if they did bad work, and they said if they did bad work they would not get paid for the *hazira*?—That is right. As I say, perhaps once a month I go round and find bad work. I have done it once since the pruning started on the day after Christmas; I once went out and sent some women home. That is the only fine that has taken place since the pruning began.

F-4504. We asked them who decided whether the work was good or bad for which no payment would be given; was it the *sardar* or the *sahib*?—There is no question of giving no payment. The ordinary thing is that if they are doing bad work they are brought back and they repair it. If there is a great deal of bad work going on which, as I say, very rarely happens, then I send three or four of them home.

F-4505. We asked them as to who decided that it was bad work, whether the *sardar* or the *sahib*, and they said that it was the *sardar* who decided it?—Of course, it is all a chain. My assistants are responsible to me; the head *sardar* is responsible to them and the *dafadar* is responsible to the headman.

F-4506. Does the *sardar* get commission of any description?—Yes; he gets a pice per day per worker.

F-4507. Is the *sardar* who gets a pice per worker per day the same *sardar* who sends a person home for bad work?—He does not send anybody home; he has no power to do that; all he can do is to bring it to the notice of my assistants or myself; he has no power to cut anybody's pay.

F-4508. Does the *sardar* get a pice per worker or for the amount of work done?—He gets a pice for each *hazira*.

F-4509. If that is so, is it not possible that he will put every form of persuasion upon a worker to do more than one *hazira*?—He might. I think the intention of giving the commission was to induce the workers to work more and thus earn more. On an average the men work only for 17 days in a month and so there is ample room for the *sardar's* persuasion without being hard on them.

F-4510. With regard to maternity benefits, does your Association have any fixed policy, or does custom vary with the different gardens?—We generally pay not more than Rs. 15 in actual cash.

F-4511. I want to distinguish between the cash bonus paid at the time of the birth of the child or at certain intervals after the birth and the amount paid to the woman in the shape of wages when she is no longer at work both before and after pregnancy?—(*Dr. McCutcheon*): This is what the resolution says: "It is decided that a maximum amount of Rs. 15 should be allowed under this head (that is under the head maternity allowances), the amount to be distributed according to the manager's discretion. Over and above this sum, a sum not exceeding Rs. 10 may be paid as allowance for an infant up to one year of age." (*Mr. Travers*): As a rule, I pay the women bonus for a month before confinement; they go on to the maternity bonus pay list. If they are not fit to take up heavy work before that period they are given light work. I have a squadron of women engaged on sweeping the leaves; they work for a few hours in the mornings. That is done really because it is one of the few methods that we have of seeing that those women are looked after.

F-4512. In the case of women who are not fit for work at all have you got a system of paying them some portion of their wages?—All sick people are paid.

F-4513. *Colonel Russell*: That is people who go to the hospital?—No. The difficulty is that we cannot get them to the hospital. Anybody who is sick is immediately put on the sick list and he is paid until he is found fit for work.

F-4514. *Miss Power*: Can you tell us how many of the gardens who are members of your Association have schools? Have you got a record of the number of schools and the number of attendances?—(*Mr. Haig*): We have no record of the number of attendances. (*Mr. Travers*): You can get the information from the education department. I think almost all the British gardens have got a school; there are some which have not got schools because they cannot get the teachers.

F-4515. It is said that the parents are against sending children to school because they would thereby lose the earnings of their children. Has your Association offered to pay the children's wages, if they attended the school, as an inducement to the parents to send their children to school?—No. The tea industry pays a good deal of taxes; we pay the ordinary taxation and we also pay a special taxation. As it is we get very little from Government towards education, and we think it is as much the business of Government to provide for the education of our children as it is of anybody in the garden. Of course, we are prepared

to help the Government in every way that we can, but we consider that Government also should assist us by providing funds.

F-4516. Is there not an age-limit at which children are allowed to work on the gardens? Is that left to the discretion of the parents?—Occasionally I have to drive away tiny little children who come to work; otherwise they are allowed to come and work.

F-4517. The children are entered in the wages book separately, is it not?—That is so.

F-4518. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Do you not fix any age-limit, say, 8, 9 or 10?—(*Mr. Haig*): We go more by the size of the children. (*Mr. Travers*): As a matter of fact, you find some very small boys doing the man's work, especially hoeing.

F-4519. *Miss Power*: Could the Association be said to have an educational policy, or is it their policy to leave it to Government to take the first step towards the compulsory education of these children?—Even if the Government of Bengal were to enact a compulsory education Act we cannot compel these people to send their children to school. We can do our best to help it, but how can we compel them? Compulsory education not only on the gardens but all over is a thing that will bear fruit only gradually. The Act may be enacted but the actual carrying out of the Act will take years; it is bound to with an uneducated lot of people. But we shall do everything we can to help it.

F-4520. Have you any system of adult education on any of the tea gardens of your association?—I have a young Bengali as master here. The school works in the evening, which is the best time for getting the children together especially in the hot weather. Now I have got a certain number of boys—they are very few I am sorry to say—who are keen on education; there are three or four of them who cannot only read and write Bengali but can also read and write English. These better boys are taught English in the afternoons.

F-4521. What happens to these boys when they cease to be students?—We give them work.

F-4522. In what capacity?—One of them, for instance, has got his job in the factory; he stencils all the tea boxes and attends to the weighment. He is quite a success in the line and there is no reason why he should not in time to come be in charge of the factory.

F-4523. Are all the students in those evening classes boys? Are there no adult workers?—No.

F-4524. Is there any attempt being made to educate the adults through the eye? For instance, have you got any cinemas?—I think there is only one estate that has got a cinema, of its own. There are many of us who want to get them, and I hope we shall when things are better.

F-4525. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Mr. Travers, I seem to have read before the memorandum that you have submitted to us, did it appear anywhere?—Half of it I sent to the European Association's Review of India, and it was copied into several other things.

F-4526. In your opinion, is the present method of recruitment for your tea plantations generally acceptable?—I think so. We get our men mostly from Bihar and Orissa, and the Government of Bihar and Orissa have never during all these years raised any objection. At one time they asked us in regard to the amount of supervision that we put on. Our present system of recruitment was partly brought up by their initiative and partly by our own.

F-4527. There was one sentence in your original article from which you have cut out the first portion. The sentence was: "Though the recruiting method in force is unpopular the tea industry itself desires a measure of supervision of recruiting," while the sentence in your present memorandum only reads "But the tea industry itself desires a measure of supervision of recruiting." You have cut out the first half of the sentence. What do you exactly mean by that, and why has it been omitted?

Sir Alexander Murray: It means that it is unpopular with the tea managers.

F-4528. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: I am only quoting the sentence that appears in the European Association's Review of India. I am asking whether it is unpopular with the managers, with the public or with the Government?—I have no recollection of using that phrase, but if I have used it I must have used it in reference to Assam; I believe that the Assam people wish to change their methods. Our system of recruitment is not at all unpopular; on the other hand, it is quite the reverse.

F-4529. Did I understand you to say that on an average the workers work 17 days in a month out of 26 days?—Yes.

F-4530. What is the number of *haziras* during those 17 days, on an average, that a man and a woman would put in? Would I be correct in saying that on an average it would be 2 *haziras*?—More than that.

F-4531. But that would be the average?—I cannot definitely say unless I actually calculate.

F-4532. Will you let us know the individual earnings, say, for the last month?—Yes, I will show my books later on. (*Mr. Haig*): It is a bad month; it is not anything like a standard. (*Mr. Travers*): The average earnings for the year were Rs. 14-4 for a man and Rs. 10-5 for a woman, while in December it was Rs. 11-8 and Rs. 8-11, respectively. (*Mr. Haig*): If you divide that by 4 as. you will get the number of *haziras* done.

F-4533. We can get it in another way. You said that you pay a commission of one pice to the *sardar* for each *hazira*. Therefore some record has got to be kept in regard to the work done by the workers?—We will show you our books later on.

F-4534. The point that I want to bring out is this that if Rs. 14 is the average that you work out for a man who must put in two *haziras*, then obviously an average worker on your estate must work for a period of more than 26 days in a month in order to make up that?—(*Mr. Travers*): In the rainy season he earns much more; he puts in three *haziras*. Then the plucking should also be considered. It is a light task and a good working young man will earn Re. 1 to Rs. 1-4 a day, and a woman from 12 as. to 14 as. besides the first *hazira*.

F-4535. In answering one of the questions put to you by the Chairman you spoke about an informal agreement that you had amongst yourselves not to increase the rates of wages. Could you give me some information as to when you last increased the rate?—Are you talking about the increase in the rate of wages or the amount of earnings?

F-4536. I am not concerned with the amount of earnings; I am referring to the increase in the rate of wages. For instance, what was the rate before for one *hazira* for deep hoeing and what is the rate to-day?—When I first came here the cost of living was very much cheaper and we were giving 4 as. and 3 as. for the *hazira*; the extra that they got was all called *doubtli*. The second *hazira* was nothing like what it is now. Then after the war when the cost of living went up and that amount was not sufficient for the labourer to live on in comfort, we did not increase the rate of wages but we decreased the task and started the system of the second and the third *hazira*, or what we call the unit system. It is worked in a variety of ways so as to allow him to earn far more money. We never have increased the rate of wages. If we had increased the rate from, say, 4 as. to 8 as. the coolie would not have the incentive to work more. We want him to work and we want him to earn. It is to our advantage to have the coolie well-off so that he can feed himself properly and keep healthy.

F-4537. I understand that. What I was driving at was this. When was the task decreased?—Just at the end of the war.

F-4538. What year would it be?—Some time in 1918 or 1919, at the time of the famine and the influenza epidemic when the cost of living went up.

F-4539. Could you give some definite particulars as to the exact date on which you decreased the task last time?—No, because I am speaking now for the industry in the Dooars as a whole, and the conditions vary from garden to garden.

F-4540. Take your own garden?—We started about that time and slowly it has reached the present state.

F-4541. When was it stabilized to the present state?—Perhaps two years ago; there has been no increase for the last two years.

F-4542. What was the actual decrease two years ago?—I cannot give details; it has been so gradual.

F-4543. Could you give for 1918 and 1919?—No, not without investigation.

F-4544. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Can you give us an approximate idea of the cost of cultivation in reference to wages?—In 1928 we spent Rs. 79,500 on cultivation.

F-4545. That figure does not help us much because you have been increasing your garden?—(*Mr. Haig*): The records of one large company in the Dooars which has added nothing to its acreage show that the amount of money spent on cultivation has risen from Rs. 3,65,000 in 1913 to Rs. 8,20,000 in 1928.

F-4546. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Since 1918-19 there may be minor changes but there has not been an increase in the rate of wages?—(Mr. Travers): Previous to 1918-19 the rise had already begun, but from that year onwards we adopted a definite policy to allow our labourers to earn considerably more than they were earning before; we initiated also a general scheme of maternity benefits and sick pay and so on about that time. Since then there has been a gradual increase, but not a considerable increase.

F-4547. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Obviously there has been an increase, but is that increase due to an increased application on the part of the worker, or is it due to the reduced task which enables him to earn more money?—We have decreased the task.

F-4548. *The Chairman*: If we could have any record showing the variation made in the task since the war, it will be helpful?—The old records are not easily to be found. We can give you the total amount spent on each garden.

Sir Alexander Murray: That will not help us for the reason that you have been extending your gardens.

F-4549. *Mr. Clow*: You can find what the *hazira* was?—I will see what I can do.

The Chairman: We have figures, I think, of actual earnings of the workers for the last ten years?

Sir Alexander Murray: We have figures for Assam but not for the Dooars.

F-4550. *The Chairman*: It will be very interesting if you can give us the average earnings of men, women and children for a period of years, say, for the last ten years?—We will try to collect them for you.

F-4551. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: With regard to the informal agreement that you have in respect of wages, what is the effect of that on the mobility of labour?—The effect is that if there was any garden in the district that gave below the average earnings to his coolies those coolies would gradually leave that garden and go to another where there was a higher rate.

F-4552. *Per contra* no garden can increase the wages, and no garden will, simply because that garden will be bound by your agreement?—No garden can increase the rate of wages, but on the other hand if a garden is short of labour, the manager will naturally do everything that he can to persuade his coolies to work to the limit of their capability.

F-4553. The point is does not this informal agreement prevent free movement of workers from one garden to another if they are convinced that they will get better wages in another garden?—It is not only the earnings by any means which attract the labour from one garden to another and affects the mobility of the labour, but the conditions under which labour live have a great influence on their stability.

F-4554. Leaving the conditions on one side would the practical effect not be what I am suggesting? Perhaps I might strengthen my argument by referring you to what the Government of Bengal themselves say. They say "the large amount of money spent on importation tended in the past to restrict forced freedom of movement in the labour market." Then again: "Labour rules make it exceedingly difficult for the labourers to find employment on any garden other than that which imported them."?—That is not true of the Dooars. There is nothing to prevent any labourer going from one garden to another garden in the Dooars so far as I am aware.

F-4555. Suppose garden A said "I will give 6 as. for a *hazira*" whereas garden B gives 4 as. You enter into an agreement and say "We shall not give 6 as. but we shall stick to the present rate which prevails, namely, 4 as." Does it or does it not, in practice, restrict the movement of the labourer from one garden to another?—I do not think so. Any alteration in the rate of wages would, I think, be very undesirable from the point of view of the labourers.

F-4556. I am not asking you whether it is desirable or not. I am asking you whether, in practice, it does not restrict the movement of labour?—I do not agree that it does.

F-4557. I shall leave it at that because it is a matter of argument. You say in your memorandum "A man, hoeing, finishes his tasks in six hours." What do you refer to there?—I refer to the two *haziras* that a man does. You saw men this morning leaving their first *hazira* and going to the second at 20 minutes past 11. They started at about 9; that is about 3½ hours for the first *hazira*, and about 2½ hours for the second *hazira*. On an average they take 6 hours.

F-4558. Let me take the case of a woman whom Col. Russell and myself timed this morning. She was pruning the tea plants. We watched for 5½ minutes and within that time she had not finished that particular plant. She told us that for a *hazira* she had to do 60 of those plants?—That is no criterion at all. You have got to remember that it is an enormous event in the lives of these people to see persons like you coming and watching them at work. They are full of interest to see you and cannot devote complete attention to their work. The women in the morning do work for about 4 to 4½ hours; they work from 8 to 12 in the morning and from 2 to about 4-15 in the afternoon.

F-4559. What do you pay for the children?—The bigger children get Rs. 2-8 and the smaller ones get Rs. 2.

F-4560. Do you pay for the *hazira* or on the monthly rate?—We pay on the monthly rate. In the rains when they go to pluck, which is a very easy work, they make a lot of money then.

F-4561. Are these children employed on pruning?—No, they are too small. Grown up children are employed and they get the women's wage.

F-4562. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Under what category do you show the children who are employed on pruning work and earn the woman's wage?—They are all entered as women.

F-4563. *Colonel Russell*: Dr. McCutcheon, how many gardens are you in charge of?—(*Dr. McCutcheon*): 15.

F-4564. And how many companies?—About six different companies.

F-4565. What is the total population that you are responsible for?—The total number of coolie inhabitants of this district is somewhere about 22,000 to 23,000.

F-4566. Have you got a hospital on each garden or have you got any central hospital?—We have no central hospital; we have a small hospital in each garden. We have a civil hospital at Jalpaiguri to which we send serious operation cases.

F-4567. We may take it that the average hospital is something like the one that we saw this morning?—Some of them are better and some are not.

F-4568. Would it be an advantage to have, for a group of gardens such as you are in charge of, a well-equipped and well-staffed central hospital?—It might be. They have one such hospital in Chanpara, Eastern Dooars.

F-4569. Does it work satisfactorily?—I have not actually seen it.

F-4570. Do you anticipate that there would be any difficulty in running a hospital of this nature if, say, six different companies are responsible for its up-keep?—I do not think so. (*Mr. Travers*): There will be difficulty in persuading coolies to enter it.

F-4571. So far as the question of finance is concerned you think that there would be no difficulty?—(*Dr. McCutcheon*): No.

F-4572. Do you think there would be difficulty in getting the coolies to come to such a hospital?—Probably.

F-4573. What distance do you think should be the maximum between a central hospital and an outlying garden?—This place, Baradighi, is practically an outlying garden. I should say that except two gardens in my district all are practically within a four mile radius. (*Mr. Travers*): This area is peculiarly compact.

F-4574. There are other areas where there are gardens that are more scattered?—(*Mr. Haig*): That is so in my district. (*Mr. Travers*): If you go to the far east in the Dooars you will find that eight gardens are spread over an area of 20 miles. (*Mr. Haig*): In the far west we have three large rivers between the gardens which are impassable during rains by any wheeled traffic. The gardens are all isolated.

F-4575. Would it be possible to connect the gardens, by means of tramways such as they have in Java?—A great many of the gardens use motor lorries now.

F-4576. But you say they are cut off during the rains?—Only some of the gardens are. (*Dr. McCutcheon*) In my own "parish," the gardens are accessible in any part of the year, as there are no large rivers, but in the "parish" in which Mr. Haig lives one cannot use wheeled traffic all the year round.

F-4577. That would be a matter of providing bridges, etc.?—Yes; we have been asking for this from a very long time, with no success. (*Mr. Travers*): If we can get better and more roads we will bless your name.

F-4578. Do you do any child welfare work on any of your estates?—(*Dr. McCutcheon*): As a general rule, we give maternity allowances. In many

gardens the babies are shown to me once a month in the presence of the manager of the garden or the senior assistant and they are given a monthly allowance; they are taken to task if the children are dirty or ill cared for.

F-4579. I suppose you have got a garden doctor on each estate?—Yes.

F-4580. Has that garden doctor got instructions in the matter of looking after all non-working children?—Yes; all are supposed to be looked after.

F-4581. In what way?—If they are ill he treats them.

F-4582. But is there any general supervision?—(*Mr. Travers*): I have two compounders and a garden doctor who go to the lines every day to see whether there are any sick persons.

F-4583. Miss Power and I went round the lines this morning for a considerable time and it seemed to us that there was considerable sickness among the children on this estate?—(*Dr. McCutcheon*) Spleen index is probably high in this area.

F-4584. You mean generally for the Dooars?—Yes.

F-4585. What would you estimate that to be?—I have not taken an estimate lately, but I should say that it is over 70 per cent. in most of the gardens.

F-4586. If that is so, then about 100 per cent. are infected?—Very likely. In 1899-1900, I think, when Drs. Stephens and Christophers visited the Dooars, a number of blood slides of children were taken and it was discovered that there was a high percentage of parasitic infection.

F-4587. We may take it that at present about 100 per cent. of the children here are infected with malaria?—Yes.

F-4588. We also made a considerable number of enquiries as to the number of deaths of children that have taken place in recent years and we found that the majority of the children who died were less than one, two or three years of age. I take it that is due to malaria?—I believe so, in many cases.

F-4589. Those children are being lost as part of your potential labour force?—Yes.

F-4590. These lives could be saved if further measures were taken?—Yes.

F-4591. Have you or your Association had in mind any definite scheme for saving this large loss of life?—Anti-malarial work is being done on a fair number of individual gardens now. (*Mr. Travers*) We are getting very favourable results from that work; malaria this year was considerably less than the year before.

F-4592. I do not know how you estimate that there has been a considerable reduction when there is now 100 per cent. infection?—There is a considerable reduction in the death rate and in the number of cases treated. We are beginning to get hold of it; we have only had one year. (*Dr. McCutcheon*) Two gardens that are within very close range of my bungalow have done a lot of anti-malarial work, draining and spraying and so on, and the actual number of cases treated is much below the average; in fact, it is about one-third of the average.

F-4593. Are you satisfied that the garden doctors on the individual gardens are properly trained and able to conduct proper preventive measures on an estate? I should think they could under supervision. (*Mr. Travers*) Many of our progressive planters consider that the "parishes" of our British doctors are too large; we want them to be reduced and more supervision of the garden doctors.

F-4594. How often do you manage to supervise the activities of the individual garden doctors?—(*Dr. McCutcheon*) I make routine visits once a fortnight; my visits sometimes get a little irregular in the cold weather. When I am called in urgently I go to the individual gardens.

F-4595. Probably you will agree that you are rather overburdened with general practitioner's work and do not have sufficient time to do general supervision?—Very often I have more consultation than administration to do.

F-4596. So that you do miss the services of a man doing whole-time preventive work?—Yes. As a matter of fact, the anti-malarial work is so largely a matter of common sense that any manager or senior assistant can supervise that.

F-4597. Perhaps there are differences of opinion as to that?—(*Mr. Travers*) I myself see that this garden is properly sprayed.

F-4598. But you may be spraying in the wrong places?—We spray along the borders of streams; in fact, if we do anything wrong, it is in excess; we spray all round the houses.

F-4599. Would it not be better for each parish or group of estates to have an officer with public health training, well trained in antimalarial work, say a malarologist, resident in the area, able to advise different doctors and managers?—Yes, I should think it would be very helpful, but he would want to have some backing. (Mr. Haig) As a matter of fact, I tried to get that in our group of gardens; I approached Duncans and Finlays and they were very sympathetic. Dr. Bentley has an experimental station near and he has lent his men to supervise my work. I have spent Rs. 5,000 this year on it.

F-4600. What is the percentage of deaths which must be registered before a garden is called unhealthy?—(Mr. Travers) In the Dooars we are not categorized in that way.

F-4601. Is that because all the gardens in the Dooars are healthy?—(Mr. Haig) The death rate in the Dooars is low.

F-4602. The death rate in this garden last year was 32.28?—(Mr. Travers) Yes, that is very high.

F-4603. In addition to the child welfare work, have you ever considered the possibility of employing trained dais or midwives in the garden?—(Dr. McCutcheon) I have; but I do not know that there are any; they are very difficult to get. (Mr. Travers) The District Board is training a number of Santhal women, but the women of other races will not employ them.

F-4604. Is it impossible to get women whom they will employ?—We can try, but of course it is going to take a good many years' persuasion.

F-4605. But I take it that if they were available they would be of great use?—Yes, if we could only get the people to employ them I would appoint them to-morrow.

F-4606. Is the midwifery work on the estate at present done by the ordinary barber midwives?—(Dr. McCutcheon) Most of them are not attended at all except by their own relations; sometimes I am called in in very difficult cases.

F-4607. Have you any system of giving sick pay to out-patients?—The garden manager does that.

F-4608. That does not appear in the hospital expenditure?—No, I do not think so; the hospital expenditure includes in-patients and sometimes out-patients who go to hospital and are fed. That expenditure is put to general expenditure I think.

F-4609. Do you give any pay to an attendant relative who cares to come to the hospital?—(Mr. Travers) The husband or wife of a sick Munda or other woman or man who comes to hospital is paid; if they are ill in their houses and we cannot get them to come to hospital, we pay an attendant at the house.

F-4610. This morning we saw a woman coming back from the hospital; she was looking after a child which had lost its mother. The woman had a small quantity of milk in her brass pot. We asked about it and she said that was the quantity of milk which was being supplied by the management from the hospital for the child. What quantity of milk is supposed to be given to such children?—I could not tell you, but the woman would also be paid for looking after the child.

F-4611. But is there a definite policy of issuing milk?—We support all our children who are left orphans.

F-4612. This child was about 18 months old and was obviously in a bad state of health?—They can get two bottlefulls of milk a day; that is the issue to children like that.

F-4613. The milk we saw was not more than half a pint, and the woman said that was all she got for the child each day?—I will enquire into that; they get two bottles a day for a child.

F-4614. What is the policy with regard to water supply?—(Dr. McCutcheon) The policy is to improve the water supply as we go along. I remember when there were nothing but very indifferent wells, some of them having no lining but being just holes in the ground. Now there are very few of those left, if any. At present the wells all have properly bricked or concrete linings, and pipe supplies are being made more and more. Some of them are gravity supplies, water being tapped from sources in the hills. (Mr. Travers) Here we shall have to have a tube-well and pump the water into a tank.

F-4615. Do you find that endless chain pumps go into disrepair very quickly?—(Dr. McCutcheon) They are quite good pumps but I think they are easily

damaged. (*Mr. Haig*) I do not think so. (*Mr. Travers*) Ours have worked for several years without any trouble; we have a special man going round.

F-4616. Are the coolies capable of using them?—(*Dr. McCutcheon*) Yes, but they use them rather roughly.

F-4617. Do you use large numbers of tube-wells?—(*Mr. Travers*) That is more an experiment. We have various kinds of water-supply here. Some are piped from a supply in the hills and some pumped from a well. At present there are very few tube-wells.

F-4618. Are there any gardens in your group which suffer largely from bowel diseases due to the water-supply?—(*Dr. McCutcheon*) I do not think so; bowel diseases do not bulk so largely as they did 20 years ago.

F-4619. Is that due to improvement of the water-supply?—Very largely I should think.

F-4620. There are no latrines on this estate?—*Mr. Travers* put in several latrines but I think they were found to be ignored.

F-4621. Of what type were they?—The ordinary pit. *Mr. Haig* put in a very elaborate septic tank latrine but it was not used. (*Mr. Travers*) They laugh at them and will not use them. (*Mr. Haig*) It cost me Rs. 2,000 to put in these latrines for one set of lines and they were never used.

F-4622. *The Chairman*: What proportion of your coolies own cows?—(*Mr. Travers*) The large majority own cows or goats.

F-4623. Do they use the milk themselves?—Yes. My milk supply for the hospital comes from outside the garden. All the milk on the gardens is consumed by the coolies themselves; I have an arrangement with people in the *busi* area. (*Dr. McCutcheon*) The coolies near a big bazaar prefer to sell it rather than use it themselves.

F-4624. Have they land for the cultivation of vegetables?—Nearly every house has a little patch near it.

F-4625. *Col. Russell*: Are you satisfied that the diet is a physiological one with regard to milk, vegetables and so on?—I think so. A good many of the Santhals are meat-eaters.

F-4626. *Mr. Travers* has said that five estates are quite sufficient for the supervision of a British doctor. Do you agree with that?—(*Mr. Travers*) 5 gardens of 1,000 acres are quite enough.

F-4627. If *Dr. McCutcheon* remained in charge of 15 gardens and had a whole-time officer doing preventive work, would that come to the same thing?—(*Mr. Travers*) Not quite. I want a board of health really to do research and to help with schemes of health for the garden. Besides that, I want the parishes of the doctors to be cut down.

F-4628. But for research work you must have a whole-time man?—Yes, a board of health.

F-4629. But the board of health would not do the research work?—(*Dr. McCutcheon*) We did suggest establishing something like a branch of the Tropical School in the district, but nobody would hear of it.

F-4630. *Mr. Travers* says each tea district of 50 gardens should have a board of health; do you not think that is too large an area?—It has not been tried; you cannot say until you try it. (*Mr. Travers*) That is the beginning. I would start with a board of health for 50 gardens with one highly qualified good man. If he finds he wants two more men to help him, by all means let him have them. His work would be to go round the estate and map out the general preventive methods. The doctor of the 5 gardens is to carry out those preventive methods.

F-4631. But the managers surely usually do the work themselves?—The manager does; we do an enormous amount of health work; but at the same time the other part of the manager's work is very considerable; he is a jack of all trades.

F-4632. I do not mean that he would do it himself, but would generally supervise?—We supervise our garden doctors, but we want more technical assistance; we want more preventive work on the garden.

F-4633. For the women and children would it be possible to make use of the services of a well trained European or Indian lady medical officer?—It may be in the future.

F-4634. You do not see any objection to it?—(*Dr. McCutcheon*) It is possible. (*Mr. Travers*) It will be rather difficult in a lonely district like this. Are you going

to put a lady doctor, a single woman, into a house by herself?—It introduces all sorts of difficulties.

F-4635. My solution of that problem is to have a central hospital with the chief medical officer resident in the compound, and the lady medical officer in another bungalow. Do you see any difficulty in that?—No. It is a new idea. (Dr. McCutcheon) It could be done all right.

F-4636. Mr. Cliff: Would this board of health be established by the Dooars Tea Association?—No, it must be done by Government with legal powers.

F-4637. Col. Russell: There was a Bill called the Bengal Tea Gardens Act of 1923?—(Mr. Travers) Yes; I drafted it to a large extent. In the second period of the Reforms the Swarajists had practically a majority on the Bengal Council and the Government, without consulting me, withdrew it. Even if there were a complete Swarajist majority I would guarantee to get a Board of Health Bill through.

F-4638. Mr. Clow: Was there any opposition to the Bill?—Government thought that, being a Government measure, the Swarajist members would oppose it.

F-4639. But was there actually any opposition?—No; the Bill was never put to the Council at all.

F-4640. Col. Russell: As far as I can make out, the tea garden area mentioned in this Bill simply refers to the tea gardens?—(Dr. McCutcheon) That was not intended; it was meant to include also waste land, *bustis*, forests and the railways. (Mr. Travers) The area would have to be decided upon by a committee of experts. (Dr. McCutcheon) The board of health would be a district board in this district so far as health matters were concerned. (Mr. Travers) The district board did oppose it on that ground; they were not certain of their position in the matter; but I think that opposition could be overcome.

F-4641. It is also suggested that the board should consist of 15 members. Do you not think such a board would be a little large?—We have to incorporate diverse interests; the districts, the Indian planters and Government would have to be represented.

F-4642. But you have 10 elected from the managers of tea estates?—My idea is to have an executive committee.

F-4643. That is for smaller areas?—For a larger scheme there would be the full board which would only meet at comparatively long intervals; there would be a small executive committee to do the real work.

F-4644. When you suggested that three members should be appointed by the local Government, what members had you in mind?—The Civil Surgeon, the District Health Officer of the District Board and the Deputy Commissioner.

F-4645. The Chairman: Do you think that such a board for a tea area where the population is mainly tea garden population, could be extended to cover general questions of welfare as well as simple questions of health?—That would be very difficult. I think it would be preferable to leave this welfare question to our own Association. We wish to increase welfare work more and more as finance permits. The next thing many of us want to introduce is the cinema; we think we can do a great deal with regard to health by that means.

F-4646. Col. Russell: But under the constitution of the board that you have mentioned your Tea Association would have an absolute majority all the time?—The cess would be very largely raised from us. Government, we hope, would pay a small amount for the adjoining area. Nine-tenths of the cess would be paid by the tea gardens.

F-4647. It is suggested that the board of health would divide the tea garden area into districts; what sort of districts do you suggest?—There should be one board of health in the Dooars with branches, another for the Terai, which is in a separate district altogether, and a third for Darjeeling if they require it.

F-4648. It is suggested that the district committee should consist of not less than three persons. Which members would that be?—I do not remember that.

F-4649. Mr. Cliff: Has anything been done since that date to get a similar measure introduced?—The last Deputy Commissioner investigated this matter again and asked me and Mr. Haig whether we approved of progress in this matter; we said: "Yes, speaking for the local planters, we did." I have also spoken to the Governor on the matter and he is keen on starting this.

F-4650. Is the Dooars Tea Association in membership with the Indian Tea Association?—Many gardens here are members of both organizations. It is not a

branch. We have many Indian members of the Dooars Planters' Association who are not members of the Indian Tea Association.

F-4651. Are you appointed doctor for the six agencies or is there a contract between each agency and you?—(Dr. McCutcheon) It is done as a group.

F-4652. Is a separate agency maintained for recruitment from Chota Nagpur distinct from the Tea Districts Labour Association?—(Mr. Travers) The majority of us recruit through the Tea Districts Labour Association in Chota Nagpur, but we have a separate agent in the district from whence most of our coolies come. The accounts are kept entirely separate.

F-4653. We have a figure of 32,000 recruits?—That is the Tea Districts Labour Association figure. In certain places we have our own buildings and our own agents.

F-4654. Can I take it the number recruited for the Dooars last year was 30,000 as stated in this return?—(Dr. McCutcheon): The coolies recruited during 1927-28 through the Tea Districts Labour Association were 29,871 souls and 26,038½ adults.

F-4655. Can you give an approximate idea of the number recruited through the other agencies?—No. (Mr. Travers): It would not be very considerable.

F-4656. Would it be a thousand?—I should think it will probably be 1/10 of the whole total.

F-4657. Can you tell me the number of houses that are on this garden?—I am afraid I could not at the moment; recently we have had an influx of new people.

F-4658. Have you any record of the number of houses?—We are building new houses now, and a record is being made at the present time.

F-4659. You have no record up-to-date?—I can find that out for you.

F-4660. You can send it later on please. Is it possible to tell us the number of recruits that you recruited last year? Do I understand the figure was 91? Is that the total recruitment?—During the whole of last year we got 153 recruits.

F-4661. Have you got the number of people who left your garden last year?—The total during the whole of the year, that is, of those going to their country, to other gardens and so on, was 177. The total number of people who came into the garden last year was 363, a surplus of 186.

F-4662. How many people do you estimate you require to employ per acre?—·9; that is the working average.

F-4663. Does ·9 per acre refer to adult labour?—No; all round, including children.

F-4664. Is your ·9 per acre based on absenteeism?—No. It is based actually on those who are not absent; our absenteeism is very large.

F-4665. Does that apply to this garden only?—For the whole of the last year the average for my garden worked out at one coolie per acre at work.

F-4666. Do you require any more labour or not?—I have about the right amount.

F-4667. Would you suggest that that figure is fairly typical of the whole of the Dooars?—A coolie per acre is sufficient not only for the ordinary upkeep but also for renovation work. The average number of children at work in my garden is practically 1/10, that is, if I have 1,200 people I have 120 children.

F-4668. I understand that you have no agreement with regard to the rates of wages between gardens but you have an understanding?—That is so. We have certain rules to prevent enticement.

F-4669. Would you mind handing in a copy of the rules to the Commission?—I will send it later on.

F-4670. I notice the Indian Tea Association saying that work is so arranged that a minimum wage is obtainable for a matter of three hours' work per day. Applying that to your own garden, what is the minimum that a person obtains? Take, first of all, a woman who works for three hours a day?—She will only receive 3 annas but that, of course, is not the minimum. On every Dooars garden that I am acquainted with the minimum is two haziras, that is to say, 8 annas for a man and 6 annas for a woman.

F-4671. That is for more than 3 hours of work?—Yes. If a woman puts in two haziras in pruning work she will take about 4½ to 4¾ hours.

F-4672. I just wanted to test the Indian Tea Association's statement with regard to three hours work?—Three annas would be rather an under-estimate for

pruning at any rate. At certain times of the year they can do hoeing and they will get 4 annas.

F-4673. That would be the minimum wage to which the Indian Tea Association refers, I take it?—Yes.

F-4674. Have you any control over the advances which the *sardars* make to the workers?—The system here in regard to advances is this: A labourer requires an advance for a marriage or to buy a cow or for any of the thousand things for which he wants to borrow. The *sardar* comes with that labourer to me and the advance is issued on their joint responsibility. We pay them all individually, and the advance is entered in the book. The *sardar* comes merely to guarantee the respectability of the labourer; of course, we also know that.

F-4675. Do any of your *sardars* make any advance of their own to work-people?—They do for day-to-day requirements.

F-4676. Day-to-day requirements include food, I take it?—If some people for some reason or other did not work for 4 or 5 days and then come to work they ask the *sardar* to give them an advance of Rs. 2 or Rs. 3 for purchasing their household requirements, with a promise to return it back when they get their pay the next week. That is the sort of advance that the *sardar* makes. The coolies are not largely indebted to their *sardars*.

F-4677. In answer to a question I think you said that the weekly payment which you make is sufficient for the ordinary purchase of the bazaar. Can you tell me what is the ordinary weekly payment?—You mean what does a coolie get?

F-4678. Yes?—At this time of the year a man can earn Rs. 1-8 a week for the second *hazira*, but very few of them get that amount.

F-4679. Some of your people said that they take advances from the *sardar* in order to buy food at the bazaar?—Very rarely. Three days a week we are giving a third *hazira*; if a coolie wishes he can earn Rs. 2-4.

F-4680. As far as you yourself are concerned you would have no objection to weekly payment?—Not a bit; as I said, I offered it to my people but they did not want it.

F-4681. Have you got any idea with regard to the average household budget of your people?—I estimate that a hard working family will spend one-third of their money on food.

F-4682. I want to know whether you have got any objection to tea garden workers on your estate forming a combination of workers, a labour union?—To tell you the truth, I should be glad in the future when it does happen, but at the present moment I do not consider that these people are sufficiently educationally advanced for forming a labour union. It will simply provide an opportunity for the agitator to harm them. They can certainly have labour unions when they have more education and when they themselves can control the unions. At present if they have a labour union it cannot be controlled by them at all. That is the trouble. As it is, I consider that the present paternal system is better for them.

F-4683. Do you feel that the combination should only come after education?—I am not talking about literary education, I am talking about the general education. That will come to them by larger ideas about things that surround them. This is gradually spreading, and I should imagine that a labour union here might come into being in about 10 or 15 years' time; I should not say before that.

F-4684. You have said, in answer to a question, that these people are fairly shrewd with regard to their terms of employment, and one notices that when going and talking to them. Is not that shrewdness which they manifest a proof of their fitness to form a union?—You forget that these people are drawn from different races and they have their different customs, and there is the greatest difficulty to pool them together. They do not like combination.

F-4685. Then it is not their ignorance, it is a difference in customs and races? Yes, but they have no training in the proper use of a union.

F-4686. Who is going to educate them, are you?—We have a sort of garden *panchayat*. I get all my headmen together and talk to them on several things. It is the beginning of the movement; in time they will have that *panchayat* run by themselves.

F-4687. Have you experimented with the *panchayat* in allowing them to deal with the wage question or with other conditions of labour?—No. We have not encouraged them at all in the garden in regard to that.

F-4688. Do you think it is possible that it might be encouraged?—I do not think so; they are not far enough advanced for that.

F-4689. If they are not sufficiently advanced would you object to there being a minimum wage board on which the public and the planters were represented for dealing with the question of wages?—To tell you the truth, we have here a tea industry where there has been up to the present a very small amount of trouble between the employer and the employed. My opinion is that any Government interference or the wage board interference is going to begin the trouble. I think it is very much better to leave an institution like ours as it is unless there is discontent amongst the labourers. There is no discontent now. You have seen that yourself; it is obvious that our labour is contented. If you introduce anything like a wage board or things of that sort in the present state of educational development, I think you will be introducing a good deal of trouble and difficulty which does not at present exist. Such a thing will not be to their advantage.

F-4690. Take the question of the advancement of these people; how do you propose that it should be begun?—Extension of education. One of our difficulties has been how to make these people save money. They get a very considerable surplus of earnings above their ordinary necessities. What I want to do is to direct that surplus into a useful channel. As it is, quite a number of them go back to their country and buy land, but we have got, in the future, to frame a policy which would direct that surplus into a useful direction.

F-4691. Shall I put this to you as the Chairman put it a few moments ago? Suppose there are a number of well-disposed persons who want to make a beginning, and they were constituted into a committee officially recognized. Would you oppose such a committee?—You mean a committee of our own people?

F-4692. Your own people and other well-disposed people. I cannot leave you out of such a committee?—At present, in the internal management of the tea gardens, we do not want outsiders.

F-4693. You do not want outsiders to interfere with your business or the discipline and direction of labour, but with regard to making a beginning for uplifting the people, would you have any objection? Would you not rather welcome such a committee?—Are you referring to my garden.

F-4694. Take the whole of the tea industry if you like?—It is a new idea to me, and requires consideration.

F-4695. I will not put it any further than this that the Commission would welcome if you could consider whether such a committee dealing with questions of the welfare of labour would not be of great advantage to the industry?—(Mr. Haig): Who would you put on the committee? (Mr. Travers): Do you mean an advisory committee or a committee with powers?

F-4696. An advisory committee might be of some use, but what I want to know from you, who have great experience on this subject, is whether it is practicable to have a representative committee consisting of the representatives of the Dooars Association and public-spirited people which would make a beginning with regard to raising the outlook and the standard of these people?—I myself and a large majority of the planters here are intensely interested in these people and are desirous of doing anything that will help them. If we can have concrete proposals from you, we can consider them and do our best to adopt them if possible.

F-4697. Before waiting for any definite recommendation from the Commission as a whole, if you could consider whether any advancement could be made along this line and send a note to the Commission we would be very much obliged to you. Take this particular garden. What is the capital cost that has been expended on hospital accommodation?—Our buildings here have cost us Rs. 6,000 but the hospital which you saw this morning is only a temporary one; we are going to put up a much bigger and a more ambitious building.

F-4698. What is the cost of maintenance of your medical work on this estate? We spent last year Rs. 13,500 and the year before last, on hospital medicines, a sum of Rs. 11,721.

F-4699. Can you give me an approximate idea of the area of *khet* land you have on this estate?—I think we have nearly 200 acres, distributed amongst 400 to 500 families. Generally each family has one-third of an acre; some have more; it depends upon the size of the family.

F-4700. *The Chairman*: You had to buy this land?—I have spent Rs. 50,000 in the purchase of *khet* land.

F-4701. From Government, is it?—We bought land from the *bustia*. We are allowed to do it. There are special rules in the matter. In buying this land we have to give an undertaking to Government that it is not for the plantation of

tea but it is for *khet* land for the coolies. Each application for purchase is investigated by the District Magistrate to see that the land is bought at a fair rate from the owners and utilized for the purpose for which it was bought.

F-4702. *Mr. Ahmed*: The tenants do not get any right to that land, is it not?—That is so. We do not come under the Bengal Tenancy Act.

F-4703. Nor does the tenant come under the law of prescriptive possession even after 20 or 30 years, is it not?—I give the land on a year's tenancy. So long as he continues to work reasonably satisfactorily he gets it year after year. He plants one year's crop, and when he has planted it, legally he can cut it.

F-4704. So he has got no right to the land?—No. I charge no rent.

F-4705. But he has to clear the ground and cut the jungle, is it not?—No. It is all *khet* land that we have purchased and developed; the land is all clear.

F-4706. Is the land situated within the garden area?—Some of it is outside the actual garden ground, but it is not jungle.

F-4707. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How do you escape the Bengal Tenancy Act?—Because tea gardens do not come under the Act.

F-4708. But that is not tea garden, it is *khet* land for cultivation?—Yes, but it comes under the tea garden lease.

F-4709. *Mr. Ahmed*: Am I right in saying that the land that you get from Government for tea plantation is given on lease?—Yes.

F-4710. And that you have a regular printed form of the lease?—Yes.

F-4711. Will you please tender a copy of that form of lease to the Commission?—We have no copy here. You can get it from our office in Calcutta. They are all 30 years' lease.

F-4712. *The Chairman*: Are they in a standard Government form?—I expect they are. I think the Deputy Commissioner, Jalpaiguri, will be able to supply you a copy of the form.

The Chairman: I think we better get it from the Government at Calcutta.

F-4713. *Mr. Ahmed*: In that form of lease it is stated that the roads within the gardens are open to the public?—Perhaps that may be so in some of the leases, but what is generally stated is that there is to be one road from North to South and one road from East to West open to the public.

F-4714. I take it that the public have a right to walk on those roads?—Yes.

F-4715. That is generally the case with regard to all leases of *khasmahal* land?—I cannot tell you.

F-4716. Will the Primary Education Bill which is now before the Bengal Legislative Council, if passed into law, operate in your area?—Yes; most certainly it will operate in Jalpaiguri district.

F-4717. Of course it will apply to the Jalpaiguri district, but will that apply to the tea gardens?—It remains to be seen whether we can come under special arrangement under the Act itself or under the District School Board.

F-4718. Will you explain briefly the idea underlying the present Bill?—The idea is that the school board of each district should be primarily the people to decide when compulsion should come in. There is also to be a central committee to act in co-operation with the Minister, and that committee can, if they think that a district is fit for compulsion and the local committee is against it, bring any methods to make the board to introduce compulsion as quickly as possible. But here in North Bengal, generally outside the tea garden, education is very backward.

F-4719. Suppose the Minister were to say that education will be made compulsory in Jalpaiguri district and that the Government will pay a portion of the cost while the remaining portion is to be defrayed from the pockets of the tea garden proprietors, will you be in favour of that?—There is to be a cess. So much of the cess is going to be paid by the landlord and so much by the tenant. In the case of the tea gardens we should pay the whole lot. That money is to go to the district fund and the district committee will decide on the subject of compulsion.

F-4720. You are in favour of payment of that money, is it not?—If the representatives of Bengal in the Council are prepared to tax themselves for the purpose of primary education, we would whole-heartedly contribute our share. That is the attitude that my party has taken up in regard to this Bill.

F-4721. You quote the opinion expressed by the Linlithgow Commission that "restrictions upon tea garden recruiting in the movement of labour should be done away with altogether," and you say that the people are free to come and go. If that is so, will you be in favour of establishment of a public bureau for recruitment of labour instead of getting the recruitment done through *sardars or recruiters*?—No, for this reason that our people who go to recruit bring back their own men or relations. We have groups of relations in our lines now and they are far more happy than they would have been if they had been separated and distributed by the bureau.

F-4722. Will you not be contented so long as you get your supply of labour irrespective of the means by which it is obtained?—I think our own organization is practical.

F-4723. But you know there are lots of abuses under the present system. Some of those who go as *sardars* do not turn up at all?—You propose, in the present state of the finances of this country, to introduce a new organization which is going to cost the taxpayer a lot of money whereas at the present moment the tea garden industry is paying for that organization.

F-4724. If by having a public bureau you can get your supply of labour at a cheaper cost, why should you not be in favour of the bureau?—I think that would lead to the dispersion of the present strength of our labour force. For instance, I have Mundas here; they go to their country and bring their own people here, and they are very happy now. But if you have a public bureau they cannot come to one and the same place for work, and they will be unhappy.

F-4725. But what does it matter to you so long as you get your supply?—You should know that a great deal depends upon the happiness and contentment of our workers.

F-4726. *The Chairman*: You wish to maintain the family system in the Dooars?—That is our intention.

F-4727. *Mr. Ahmed*: You say in your memorandum: "What is required is a board with representatives of each Government concerned, to sit with the nominees of the industry, and thus to manage this great recruiting organization of a great industry"?—That is my personal opinion.

F-4728. If such a board is formed will you take on it the workers' representatives?—The workers' representatives here are we ourselves, while in their country the workers' representatives are the officers of Government.

F-4729. I think you know that only ten months ago we passed a Bill called the Trade Disputes Bill?—Yes, an excellent Bill too. I have no objection to the workers' representatives being on that board when these people get to that stage of development. For instance, I am perfectly willing to have a few representatives of the Mundas when they are sufficiently educated.

F-4730. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: But why not anybody who represents labour movement in this particular area?—These aborigines at present do not come under the ordinary labour category; they are quite a separate class of people; they have their own racial customs. Therefore any representation must be from amongst themselves.

F-4731. That is true, but what objection could there be for labour representatives from this province?—The representative should be one who knows actually these people. If you have such an educated man, then I say he is welcome to represent the people.

F-4732. *Mr. Ahmed*: You say: "What the industry does not desire is the inclusion of politicians or outsiders, who know nothing or little of the industry, and who would interfere in what is entirely a willing and voluntary movement of free labour, too poor to pay for transport to a distant field of work." I know the type of politicians that you are afraid of, because you know that the Swarajists have given or will give trouble. I am not a swarajist. Will you be in favour of taking me on the board?—I am a politician myself. My point is—let me repeat it once more—that these aboriginal people have their own racial customs, their own religion and so on; they are a primitive set of people. There is a great deal to admire in what you may call their culture. I do not want any alterations to be made in that except by the express will of the people themselves.

Diwan Chaman Lall: Mr. Travers says he has no objection to any representative of labour provided he knows the people in the recruiting area.

F-4733. *Sir Alexander Murray*: What do you give to the recruiting *sardar* who brings back 7 or 8 coolies?—He gets a bonus of Rs. 5 for each and 3 months' full pay.

F-4734. I notice that your birth rate is high?—Yes.

F-4735. A high birth rate usually carries with it a high death rate; in 1927-28 your death rate went up from 30 to 35?—(Dr. McCutcheon) 1928 was an unhealthy year. I have some figures taken over a fair number of the gardens of this district; in 1927 of infants the births were 799, deaths 122, representing an infantile mortality of 152.7 per thousand. In 1928 the average death rate was 165 per thousand and in 1929 it went down to 150.

F-4736. Why was it high?—(Mr. Travers) It is due to the malaria here; in gardens where they have no malaria the death rate is half that.

F-4737. You said your houses had not been repaired?—They are under repair now.

F-4738. Who does the repairing?—A contractor.

F-4739. At whose expense?—At the garden's expense.

F-4740. Who erects the house first of all?—The estate erects them.

F-4741. I see some gardens give material and money to the people to enable them to erect their own houses?—I used to do that here; we used to give them the material and pay them for building the houses; but some of these people, the Mundas, in their own country make houses out of sun-dried brick and make a very poor house of thatch, so I found the contractor made them better.

F-4742. You told us that the tea gardens have an agreement regulating the rate of wages?—It is hardly that; we have an understanding that the actual rate of wages shall not be increased.

F-4743. Do you attempt to regulate the size of the task in any way?—No, it is impossible because from garden to garden the soil differs to such an extent.

F-4744. Have you ever had complaints from a neighbouring garden that you have taken some of their coolies and they want you to return them?—Sometimes coolies from another garden will come here. If they owe any money to the garden they have left, they will bring a bill. Those labourers then come up before me and I investigate the matter I ask them if they owe money to the garden from which they have come and tell them I propose to pay that amount. I ask the coolie if he is agreeable, and he says, yes, if he wants to stay here. Those are the rules for the whole district. If the coolie says he owes the money but refuses to pay it, then we send him back to the garden he has come from to make an arrangement with the manager there about it; we would not employ him.

F-4745. Assuming you pay the money for him and he comes into your service, do you then deduct from him what he owes?—Yes; of course it is deducted from his pay very slowly. We would deduct about As. 12 from Rs. 15 monthly pay. It depends, of course, on the amount of his debt.

F-4746. At present what is the total indebtedness of your workers to you and what is the total monthly wage bill?—The amount of advances to coolies on December 31st last, when it was pretty low, was Rs. 1,364; in the middle of the year it was Rs. 2,400. We pay about Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000 a month in wages.

F-4747. *The Chairman*: Have your workers other debts apart from their indebtedness to you?—No, very little. I have a Marwari shopkeeper here; he has been here during the whole of my period. I have never had a single complaint by a labourer against him; they cannot be very much indebted to him.

F-4748. He is under your control?—Yes. He does a very good business here on what is more or less a cash basis. I have no doubt at *pooja* time when there is a big festival he may allow a coolie to take away a new *sari* cloth for his wife on credit. If the coolies complained about him he would have to leave; he is under a yearly tenancy. We encourage the labourers to come to us for advances.

F-4749. Therefore you think that your people are not, as in some parts of India, really in the hands of money lenders?—No, I am sure they are not. That is one of the few holds we have over them. If a coolie is a respectable man we want to give him an advance if he requires one, because that is an incentive to work; he then turns out and works his full period.

F-4750. Do you keep a separate book for these advances?—Yes.

F-4751. Although you maintain a shop for the convenience of the workers on your estate, there is no tie that they must make their purchases there?—No;

there is a weekly bazaar on the gardens to which many shopkeepers come, and a great many coolies go up to one of the big centres where there are large bazaars. They are not tied to this shopkeeper at all.

F-4752. Is there short-term recruitment to this district or to this estate?—Not to this estate; those gardens that are short of labour bring up the short-timers.

F-4753. There are some in the Dooars?—Yes.

F-4754. Recruited for 6, 9 and 12 months?—Yes. (*Mr. Haig*) I have some experience of that. They usually come up without their wives; a few of them bring their wives. I only employ them for 6 months during the busy season. I have been taking them for 6 months for 5 years. At the end of their period I send them home; they all wish to go home. This last year that has just finished I had 40 per cent. who had been with me for a period before. During this coming year I expect I shall have possibly 60 per cent. who have been before.

F-4755. Does that mean they have liked the life?—They have liked the money; they come up and earn the money in 6 months and they go back. We guarantee them three *haziras* a day, As. 12 a day. I waited this year until May and I got them for May until October.

F-4756. Are those all from one district?—Yes, Santhal Parganas.

F-4757. Do you find any cases amongst them of people who afterwards bring up their families and become settlers?—I have not found any of them; they may do so in time.

F-4758. So far you treat them as a class apart?—Yes.

F-4759. They are not expected to be potential settlers?—No, I have not found that. They are so useful in regulating my supply of labour that I do not try to encourage them to settle. If we settle coolies we have got to pay them for 12 months and find them work for 12 months. These coolies come up when I want them and I need not keep such a large permanent staff.

F-4760. Then you consider from your experience that short-term labour is really a business proposition?—A certain amount of it.

F-4761. Treated as a balance of labour to increase your force when your needs are greatest?—Yes. I had 150 in 1929. My average daily muster will possibly be 1,200; it is about 10 per cent.

F-4762. About 10 per cent. of added short-term workers during your busy period, May to November?—Yes.

F-4763. *Mr. Cliff*: What do they cost you per head to recruit?—They cost me the return railway fare; when they finish their complete work they get Rs. 5 bonus and the *sardar* who brings them up gets Rs. 5 bonus; that is Rs. 20, and the Tea Districts Labour Association commission I think amounts to Rs. 3 per head.

F-4764. Does one *sardar* bring 120?—No, I have half a dozen *sardars* or 8 *sardars*; I allow them to bring so many each. I was very short of labour when I went to this garden 7 years ago and I have had as many as 500 short term coolies on the garden, but I have now reduced it to 150 and possibly this year I may not require so many. I can get a *sardar* to bring me back as many as I want. One of my *sardars* whom I gave to another garden took up 500 short-term coolies.

F-4765. That of course reduces the expenses of recruitment?—No, we pay the same commission to the *sardar* for recruiting.

F-4766. *The Chairman*: I suppose the conditions are stated in their engagement paper?—There is no engagement paper; they know what they are coming to.

F-4767. Is there not a question paper?—Not in connection with those. When I want them I just wire down to the agent and tell him the number I allow each *sardar* of mine who is down in his country to bring up, and they are brought up. There is no agreement, nothing of that sort.

F-4768. Then how do they know that their earnings will be As. 12 a day?—My *sardars* tell them.

F-4769. Your *sardars* are authorized to state the terms?—Yes.

F-4770. That As. 12 a day is guaranteed?—Yes, if they care to work for it.

F-4771. If they work the three *haziras*?—Yes.

F-4772. How many hours does that mean?—In the rains they turn out very early in the morning and they can generally finish their two *haziras* in 6 hours. They are all good big men; I do not take weeds. In the afternoon they will do another *hazira* in about the same time, or possibly 2½ hours; I give them a little less for the third *hazira*.

F-4773. How many hours a day do they have to work for the As. 12?—8 to 8½. It boils down to As. 1½ an hour.

F-4774. Have you found any social difficulties at all in having these single men for a period of 6 months?—No, I have not. They live together in large parties. I have never had any case of trouble.

F-4775. *Miss Power*: How do they live; do they feed together?—I provide a cook for 25 and their food is prepared for them; I pay the cook.

F-4776. Do you employ casual labour over and above that?—I have no casual labour; I cannot get it.

F-4777. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Do you provide the food as well?—They pay for it but I buy the food.

F-4778. What does it cost per head?—I think about As. 4 per head a day. They do themselves very well; they work hard and they need a lot of food. The ordinary garden coolie does not eat as much.

F-4779. *Miss Power*: Are they sending money back regularly to their homes or do they bring it back in a lump sum?—Some deposit money with me and then take it back. Some of them get my clerks to make out money orders and send it back.

F-4780. How much do you reckon they save?—It costs them As. 4 a day to live and they can save about As. 8 a day. They can save about Rs. 12 a month on that.

F-4781. *Mr. Clow*: How much do they save?—They save practically all of it.

F-4782. How much do they deposit with you?—They very often send it down and some is deposited with me; it varies; they also keep it themselves. There are occasional cases when they lose their money.

(The witnesses withdrew. The Commission adjourned to Banarhat.)

DOOARS.

Fifty-ninth Meeting.

(Held at Debpara Tea Estate.)

Tuesday, 21st January, 1930.

PRESENT:

THE RIGHT HON'BLE J. H. WHITLEY (Chairman).

| | |
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| SIR ALEXANDER MURRAY, K.T., C.B.E. | DIWAN CHAMAN LALL, M.L.A. |
| MR. A. G. CLOW, C.I.E., I.C.S. | MISS B. M. LE POER POWER. |
| MR. KABIR-UD-DIN AHMED, M.L.A. | L.T.-COL. A. J. H. RUSSELL, C.B.E. |
| MR. JOHN CLIFF. | I.M.S. (Medical Assessor). |
| MR. S. LALL, I.C.S. | } Joint Secretaries. |
| MR. A. DIBBIN. | |

Mr. JOGES C. GHOSE, Vice-Chairman, Indian Tea Planters' Association, Mr. NALINI RANJAN GHOSE, M.A., B.L., Mr. JOY GOVINDA GUHA, Secretary, Indian Planters' Medical Board.

F-4783. *The Chairman*: What area does the Indian Tea Planters' Association cover?—Practically all the Indian planters in Assam, in the Dooars and in Terai are in the Association.

F-4784. How long has your Association been in existence?—About 14 years.

F-4785. How many gardens are covered by the membership?—Thirty-three gardens.

F-4786. What acreage of tea do they represent?—Roughly 25,000 acres.

F-4787. Does your Association maintain any relations with the Dooars Planters' Association or the Indian Tea Association?—We are not affiliated with them, but we all act conjointly in matters of importance.

F-4788. I take it that the purpose of your Association is to watch the general interests of the tea industry, particularly with regard to Indian owned gardens?—Yes.

F-4789. In connection with the recruitment of labour for the tea gardens, do you work independently or in conjunction with the Indian Tea Association and the Tea Districts Labour Association?—We generally work independently. One or two gardens may be members of the Tea Districts Labour Association, but generally our Association has nothing to do with the Tea Districts Labour Association. Each garden (sometimes two or three gardens joining together) sends its own recruiters and recruiting agents.

F-4790. What is your position in regard to the supply of labour?—There are four varieties of coolies: those who come to settle permanently, those who come for one year, those who come for six months and those who come for nine months.

F-4791. Do the coolies who come on short-term engagements return home at the expense of the gardens?—Yes, if they stay the full period of the engagement.

F-4792. In connection with the engagement of short-term labour, is there any guarantee given with regard to the *hazira* or the earnings?—No.

F-4793. Are not your agents in the recruiting areas instructed as to what statement they should make to the labourers in regard to what they will earn when they come here?—As a matter of fact the coolies know all about it.

F-4794. The *sardars* simply talk about the existing conditions on the garden; there is no statement made as to earnings of As. 8 or As. 12 a day?—No. (Mr. Joy Govinda Guha) Some of the short-term coolies have worked before in the garden and know all about it.

F-4795. Do you recruit, in the main, from the same districts year after year?—(Mr. Joges Ghose) Yes.

F-4796. Is there much interchange of coolies between garden and garden?—Very little, but there is a tendency amongst the coolies to migrate from garden to garden.

F-4797. Is that because they hear the conditions are better on one garden, or is it because they have friends there?—It is difficult to say. When a new garden is opened the coolies always like to go there because they can earn much more money.

F-4798. I gather the members of your Association have an understanding amongst themselves with regard to a more or less uniform rate of remuneration?—Yes. In the Dooars the fixed rate for a *hazira* is As. 4 for a man, As. 3 for a woman and 1 anna for a child. One man can do 2, 3 and even 4 *haziras*.

F-4799. Is there anything done on the gardens within your Association in the matter of education?—There are primary schools on some gardens.

F-4800. Do you find a reluctance to attend school in the absence of compulsion?—The boys do not like to attend school. If they are asked to attend school they say: "Are you going to pay us *hazira* for doing so?" On one occasion I saw a fire raging on the Estate. I went out to investigate and I saw all the coolies standing in front of the fire. I said: "Help to put out this fire," and they immediately said "Will you give us *hazira* for doing so?" They want to be paid for everything they do.

F-4801. *Colonel Russell*: In your memorandum you mention the Indian Planters' Medical Board. What is the constitution of that Board?—(Mr. Govinda Guha) Ten Directors of the Companies are members of the Board. There are no other members. The Directors of the tea companies select their representatives to be on the Board. There is also a President and Secretary.

F-4802. What was the object with which this Board was formed?—To realize contributions from tea gardens. The medical officers are under the Board and not under any particular company. A number of gardens are under one each of the medical officers. (Mr. Joges Ghose) It was started for the proper supervision of all the medical and sanitary arrangements on all the gardens.

F-4803. So as to include your whole area under the supervision of a single body?—Yes.

F-4804. Do you raise a cess for the payment of the whole of the expenditure of this Medical Board, including the Secretary and the medical officers?—Yes.

F-4805. The whole group pays into the central fund, from which fund the whole of your medical staff is paid?—Yes.

F-4806. Do you divide the whole area into groups of gardens?—Yes, three groups.

F-4807. There are three medical officers looking after how many gardens?—Twenty-five out of the 33 gardens comprised in the Association. Some of the gardens became members of the organization, but afterwards left.

F-4808. Why did they leave?—It was on rather a personal question.

F-4809. Will you supply the Commission with figures showing the amount of cess that is collected for this purpose and the way in which it is spent? Will you also send a copy of the expenditure for 1929?—Yes, we will do so.

F-4810. There is no definite Board of Health for the Dooars tea gardens area, is there?—(Mr. Joy Govinda Guha) No.

F-4811. Would you be in favour of the formation of a Board of Health somewhat on the lines which were promulgated by Mr. Banerjee in his Bill of 1928?—No. We discussed that and we were not agreeable to the constitution which would make our representation on that Board very small. We have had bitter experience in regard to questions which have arisen between Indian and European gardens—not in regard to health matters but in regard to other matters. We

found that whenever there was any dispute between an Indian and a European garden the Indian garden never got any support from any European garden.

F-4812. Would you agree to the principle of having a Board of Health for the Dooars district?—(Mr. Juges Ghose) We think it is unnecessary. It would be very costly and we think no adequate return or advantage would be obtained.

F-4813. There are some gardens in the Dooars district with 100 per cent. malarial infection. Do you not think a properly constituted Board of Health with a proper staff could do something to improve that state of affairs?—We would welcome all preventive malarial measures, but there has been a huge expenditure in the past and nothing has been done to eradicate malaria.

F-4814. If you had a properly constituted Board of Health, with an experienced staff of malarialogists, public health officers, and so on, would not a great deal more be able to be done than is being done now?—I am of the opinion that it would be better for each individual garden itself to try to eradicate the disease. I think that would be a success, and that conjoint action would be a failure.

F-4815. Are there individual hospitals maintained on your individual gardens?—Yes.

F-4816. There is no combination of any group of gardens in respect of a central hospital?—No.

F-4817. Do you think it would be an advantage to have a central hospital for a group of, say, 5 to 7 gardens?—No, I do not. We only have one or two serious cases during a year and we can send those to Jalpaiguri. The labourers have to be educated up to come to the hospital. They have a reluctance to come. If they are ill and we want them to come to the hospital they want *hazira*.

F-4818. Supposing a Board of Health was formed for a tea garden area such as the Dooars: do you anticipate there would be any difficulty between the District Board as such and the Board of Health for the tea garden area?—We would prefer that any possible Board of Health should be a sub-committee of the present District Board, containing some outsiders.

F-4819. If that arrangement were come to, would you withdraw your objections to the formation of a Board of Health?—I think so, but there are many minor points to consider.

F-4820. Are the gardens in your area still inspected by the Civil Surgeon?—Yes.

F-4821. What relation has the tea garden area with the Public Health Department of Bengal?—(Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose) Whenever any requisition is made by any of the gardens for any help or assistance, the District Health Officer visits that garden, and the sanitary staff of the Board helps them. All statistics are kept by the Health Officer.

F-4822. He comes only on requisition?—Yes.

F-4823. The District Health Officer has no power of entering a garden for the purposes of inspection and public health work?—It cannot be said that he has no power, but in order to avoid any misunderstanding he generally does not come unless he is invited by the individual garden. He has the power.

F-4824. The figures for 1928 show that the Civil Surgeon only inspected 10 gardens during that year. The Civil Surgeon has many other duties to perform, and he is not qualified in public health work. Would it not be better to have your gardens inspected by a public health officer?—(Mr. Govinda Guha) If the gardens do not object, the Health Officer of the District Board may, on his usual rounds, visit the gardens.

F-4825. Do any of the owners of Indian tea gardens do any child welfare work on their estates? Do any of the gardens employ trained midwives or trained *dais*?—It is difficult to get *dais* here. The District Board started training *dais*, the Government paying for their training, but our attempts were not very successful.

F-4826. If trained women were available you would have no objection to employing them?—(Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose) Certainly not. We would welcome it.

F-4827. Supposing there was a central hospital for each group of gardens with wards for maternity cases, and with a child welfare centre, would it help the physician to have in that centre a residence for either a lady medical officer or for a lady health visitor for each particular group of gardens?—(Mr. Juges

Ghose) I do not think it would be of much use, because the coolies have no confidence in either trained or untrained European midwives.

F-4828. I was not thinking about European midwives?—They have absolutely no confidence either in Indian or European lady doctors.

F-4829. *Diwan Chaman Jall*: Do you not think the coolies could be educated up to the visits of trained *dais*, health visitors and lady doctors?—(*Mr. Govinda Guha*) I think it would take a long time. (*Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose*) I think if they saw that with trained *dais* the number of miscarriages was less, and so on, they would gradually get educated up to trained *dais*; but if we were to ask the coolies to go to a central hospital they would not go. (*Mr. Jages Ghose*) They would rather bolt. (*Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose*) Yes, they would. We experienced that difficulty in connection with vaccination and inoculation. The people are now seeing that cholera is being stopped by inoculation, and they are gradually coming up to take it, but at first we had great difficulty.

F-4830. Would you anticipate the same gradual improvement in regard to the use of trained *dais* and lady doctors?—Yes.

F-4831. *Colonel Russell*: You give the infantile mortality rate as "roughly" 80 per thousand. That is extremely low. Are you sure of that figure? What does "roughly" mean?—It may mean 81 or 82.

F-4832. Are you certain that all your births are being registered?—(*Mr. Joy Govinda Guha*) The guarantee of accuracy of that figure in the gardens is much more than outside the gardens. (*Mr. Jages Ghose*) The garden doctor visits all the coolie lines and collects these figures and they are necessarily accurate.

F-4833. I notice you put down the death rate as 22.4. In the report of the Jalpaiguri Labour Board of this garden the death rate among *Paradhis* is given as 58.63. What proportion of *Paradhis* have you got on this estate?—(*Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose*) A very small proportion.

F-4834. I see it is 300 out of 1,100, so you will admit that a death rate of 58.63 in a group of 300 people is high?—If the whole district is taken that figure may be correct, but locally it is not correct.

F-4835. Is there any supervision of the health of non-working children here, children, say, from the age of 2 to 6 or 7?—(*Mr. Jages Ghose*) Children aged 4 or 5 are all working children. (*Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose*) The whole family is under the supervision of the garden doctor.

F-4836. Nothing special is being done for non-working children?—No. (*Mr. Jages Ghose*) The doctors have to visit coolie lines every day. If there is any case of illness they are at once informed by the lines *chowkidars* and they at once visit the case.

F-4837. What is the form of maternity benefit which you give in your group of gardens?—(*Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose*) Rs. 5 ten days before the birth and Rs. 5 fifteen days after the birth. If the woman is ill for more than 15 days for any reason whatsoever she is given an extra allowance.

F-4838. Does the garden doctor issue any orders with regard to pregnant women ceasing work?—I do not think there are any special orders.

F-4839. So that a woman may work up to the day of the birth of the child?—That is extremely rare.

F-4840. Have you got protected water supplies on your estates?—Yes.

F-4841. What form do they take?—(*Mr. Jages Ghose*) In some gardens the water comes from the hills or the streams. *Chowkidars* look after the streams. In other gardens there are deep tube wells. In one garden there are three 10" tube wells going to a depth of 110 ft. More and more deep tube wells are being sunk every year in the tea gardens.

F-4842. How do you deal with the registration of still-births?—(*Mr. Joy Govinda Guha*) They are recorded as deaths.

F-4843. But not as births?—(*Mr. Jages Ghose*) They are recorded as births and deaths simultaneously. (*Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose*) The record shows that it is a still-birth.

F-4844. Do you include still-births in your birth register and also in your death register?—(*Mr. Joy Govinda Guha*) I cannot say.

F-4845. Will it be possible to find out?—Yes, the doctor can tell us.

F-4846. *Mr. Ahmed*: With regard to the education of children on tea garden estates, you said just now that the boys do not like to go to school. You also mentioned the incident of a fire when the coolies asked if you would pay

hazira if they helped to put it out?—(*Mr. Joy Govinda Guha*) There was a case when one of the coolies' own house was on fire. He was playing the fiddle when it was on fire. The manager went to him and said: "Your house is on fire; why are not you doing anything to put it out?" The coolie answered: "You will give me another place to live in."

F-4847. Do you not think compulsory education would bring about a solution of these difficulties?—Do you mean only for the tea gardens or for the whole of India?

F-4848. The municipalities of certain districts are starting a system of compulsory education?—There is a vast difference between people who live within municipalities and tea garden coolies.

F-4849. In Assam and in other districts and Provinces systems of compulsory education have been started. Why should not some system of compulsory primary education be started in the tea garden area?—(*Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose*) The coolies would run away if such a drastic measure were introduced.

F-4850. Then what do you suggest in order to alleviate their difficulties?—They do not experience any difficulties. (*Mr. Joyes Ghose*) We can only establish schools and see if the coolies go to them. If they do we will pursue the matter further, but it would not be advisable to compel them to attend school.

F-4851. Would it not be advisable that children of a certain age, say, from 6 to 11, should be educated before they went to work?—(*Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose*) Certainly not.

F-4852. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: Why not?—Because if you resorted to any force or compulsion they would run away.

F-4853. If there is an epidemic of cholera do you not take compulsory measures in order to overcome the epidemic?—Certainly.

F-4854. Then similarly if it is a good thing that children should be educated, why should not you use compulsion?—The coolies do not appreciate education. An epidemic they can understand, but the benefit of education is not apparent to their minds.

F-4855. You mean the parents will fear the loss of earnings on the part of their children by their children going to school, but would not that difficulty be overcome if you pay to the parents the equivalent of the earnings which they would lose by their children going to school?—They would not be satisfied even then, because they look upon going to school as some sort of sacrifice on their part.

F-4856. *Mr. Ahmed*: How would you remove that difficulty?—By gradual education, but not compulsory education.

F-4857. How will you start?—Primary schools are already in existence, and the number is increasing.

F-4858. Would not you like to expedite the solution by giving them more facilities to go to school?—Certainly.

F-4859. Why not make it compulsory for children from 6 to 11 years of age to go to the primary school?—Because the word "compulsory" would be distasteful to them.

F-4860. Is it not a fact that the parents, of themselves, cannot earn enough wages for their own needs and thus cannot afford to send their children to school?—That is not the reason.

F-4861. *Mr. Cliff*: Has your Association any measures for dealing with the enticement of labour as between garden and garden?—Yes.

F-4862. What are those measures?—The Labour rules framed in consultation with the Deputy Commissioner and the Chairman of the Association.

F-4863. I see that your Association has fixed certain rules for its own protection. Have you any objection to the Indian Trade Union Congress sending representatives to organise the tea garden workers into trade unions so that they also can fix rules?—Yes, we have great objection to that, because if outsiders came into tea gardens and tried to organise the labour we would be nowhere.

F-4864. You have formed an Indian Tea Planters' Association. Why should not there be an Indian tea garden workers' association?—From the point of view of principle we cannot object, but in reality much mischief is done by those who come in the name of trade unions with a view to organising the labour but who actually bring disaster.

F-4865. But if the All-India Trade Union Congress sent their representatives, who were not concerned with other matters, might not they be allowed to organize the tea garden workers?—The difficulty is that they do not know the local conditions and methods. They come with some abstract ideas and no one can have anything to say against them; but in reality difficulties arise.

F-4866. I can see that people who pursue abstract principles and ideas may get into difficulties, but surely you cannot object to people coming to study and learn local habits in order to obtain a combination of the workers?—We believe that a thing which grows naturally by itself is a benefit, but if labourers who actually have no grievances are taught to consider that they have grievances, which never before were considered by them to be grievances, complications arise.

F-4867. Would you oppose any organization of tea garden workers?—Yes, because we have found by past experience that when outsiders have come there has been discontent amongst our labour.

F-4868. What is the adult labour force that you require per acre on tea garden cultivation?—(Mr. Joges Ghose) One to 1½.

F-4869. Are your labourers called to work in the morning?—They come voluntarily.

F-4870. At what hour do they come?—Those who do hoeing come earlier than the others.

F-4871. At what hour?—At this season they come about 7 or 7.30. In the other part of the year they come between 5 and 6 and they finish by 9 or 10.

F-4872. If a man starts between 5 and 6, how soon does he finish his first hazira of deep hoeing?—Within 2 to 3 hours. It is about 3 hours for the first hazira.

F-4873. If a man comes out between 5 and 6 does he do, 2, 3 and 4 haziras during the day?—He works until the midday meal, then he stops, and then he goes on again in the afternoon.

F-4874. What time does he finish in the afternoon?—He begins between 2 and 3 o'clock and finishes at 5.

F-4875. Can it be said that the local labour you recruit is about 10 per cent. of your labour force?—(Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose) The busti labourers are not settlers on the estate. When they have no work at home they come on the garden.

F-4876. Do the local settlers work regularly on the garden?—Very few. When they are sowing or reaping paddy they do not come.

F-4877. With regard to the figure of 70 to 75 per cent. of permanent dwellers on the estate, does that apply to all your gardens?—Yes.

F-4878. Is there much khet land in this area?—(Mr. Joges Ghose) All the gardens are now purchasing land which is freely given to the coolies. The gardens have spent Rs. 60,000 on that head.

F-4879. Can you supply the number of individual holders of khet land on these gardens?—We will get that.

F-4880. Is it your policy to provide khet land for your garden labourers?—(Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose) Yes. We have found that that satisfies the coolies more than anything else. (Mr. Joges Ghose) The coolies will not remain on a garden which has no khet land. Some of the gardens are in great difficulty by not being able to purchase khet land for the coolies. If there were no restrictions placed upon them by Government they would purchase much more in order to satisfy the coolies. (Mr. Govinda Guha) More land is not only required for khet but for grazing purposes. (Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose) That is an important matter for the coolies. They must have cattle and they must have grazing land.

F-4881. *Miss Power*: Do you try to apportion the amount of land evenly between the workers? Is there a maximum amount that any one family may hold?—Yes.

F-4882. Is it more general for the members of your Association to pay wages weekly or monthly?—(Mr. Joges Ghose) Monthly; and we have to pay them advances every week.

F-4883. If you have to pay them advances every week why do you not pay the wages weekly?—They prefer monthly payments. That is the system here, and they prefer it.

F-4884. If they have to borrow weekly why do they prefer monthly payments?—(Mr. Govinda Guha) If they were paid their wages weekly they would immediately spend them.

F-4885. Taking the short-term labour, how much does a short-term labourer send home?—A hardworking coolie can take home five or six hundred rupees after two or three years.

F-4886. Are you referring to a short-term labourer?—No; I cannot say as to the short-term labourer. Some of our former coolies have now become big landowners with an annual income of from Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 10,000. I know one who has three elephants and Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000. He sells paddy to the extent of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000 every year.

F-4887. *The Chairman*: What is the name of that man?—Chirisburra. There is another man who has about 400 acres of land.

F-4888. He came here first as a coolie?—Yes.

F-4889. *Miss Power*: Has your Association any policy as to the minimum age at which children on your gardens should be allowed to begin work?—(*Mr. Joges Ghose*) We have no special rule about that.

F-4890. You referred just now to children beginning work at the age of 4 or 5. What sort of work do they do?—They catch flies, mosquitoes and caterpillars and apply sulphur to the pruned bushes.

F-4891. Are the earnings of those children entered separately in the wage book or do their earnings go in with those of their parents?—Every one has a separate account.

F-4892. *Miss Power*: What is your scale of remuneration for children of 4 or 5 years of age?

Sir Alexander Murray: You do not employ children of 4 or 5 years of age, do you?—No, we do not employ them. They start generally from about 6 years of age.

F-4893. *Miss Power*: You said earlier that they started work at 4 or 5?—(*Mr. Nalin Ranjan Ghose*) He did not mean that. (*Mr. Joges Ghose*) I meant when they are really young.

F-4894. *Miss Power*: What is the usual scale of remuneration for the young children who do this work?—They generally earn one-sixth for the *hazira*, and when killing mosquitoes they get one pice for every one or two mosquitoes.

F-4895. At what age do they do pruning?—Only adults do pruning as that requires strength.

F-4896. I have seen numbers of small children doing pruning?—There are two sorts of pruning, light pruning and heavy pruning. Young children cannot do light pruning properly.

F-4897. You have no children on light pruning here?—No.

F-4898. *Diwan Chaman Lall*: In your opinion has the present system of education, as it prevails to-day in and around the tea gardens, failed?—(*Mr. Nalin Ranjan Ghose*) There is no special system in the tea gardens. As it prevails in the district I do not think it is a failure.

F-4899. What is the percentage of children on the tea gardens which you represent that goes to school?—It varies on the different gardens, but the number is small.

F-4900. The official report says that there are 1,400 odd children who go to 76 schools in the Jalpaiguri district. From the point of view of an educationist who desires education to be spread among the people that is not a very satisfactory figure, is it?—No.

F-4901. You suggest that the coolies prefer certain things. What method have you of finding out what the coolies prefer and what they do not prefer?—They express what they feel. If they feel a tendency to go to school they will tell you so.

F-4902. When did you last ask them whether the method of payment in vogue here is preferable or not preferable to them?—It was practically demanded by them.

F-4903. When and how?—If another garden is paying higher wages than the garden on which they are, there is a tendency for the coolies to go to that other garden. You learn these things instinctively.

F-4904. Do you not think it would be preferable if the workers could make a representation to you and let you know what their needs and demands are?—I would welcome it if they were more educated.

F-4905. Leave the question of education on one side. Would it not be preferable if you could get the workers to make representations to you in regard to their conditions of work?—Yes, if it was left to themselves to do it.

F-4906. You say you instinctively get to know about these things. Would it not be better if a regular method were adopted by which you could get to know these things?—As matters stand at present there cannot be any regular method because it would be artificial.

F-4907. The cultivation of tea is artificial. The whole of our civilized life is artificial. Is it preferable that the workers should be in a position to make representations to you?—As things stand at present I consider it not to be preferable. (*Mr. Joges Ghose*) They can always go and speak their minds to the manager. They can say: “In the neighbouring garden the rate is so and so. Here it is only so and so. We will not work here.” Practically they demand that their wages should go up.

F-4908. So that the method generally is the threat of a strike?—No.

F-4909. When you state that they say “We will not work here,” what else does it mean but the threat of a strike?—The threat is that they will go away to somebody else's garden.

F-4910. Do you not think it will be better to avoid the possibility of their decamping by having some regular method of communication with them whereby you could get to know what exactly they wanted and what they did not want?—(*Mr. Nalini Ranjan Ghose*) We have that method.

F-4911. With regard to your *hazira*, did not your members enter into some agreement between yourselves that there should be no increase in the rates?—It was an implied understanding.

F-4912. When did the Indian Planters' Association give an increase in the rate of the *hazira*, last?—(*Mr. Joges Ghose*) The previous rate was As. 3-6 in 1918. Now the rate is As. 4.

F-4913. I notice that you say nothing in your memorandum with regard to profits, prices and cost of living. You also state that “wages have no relation to profits.” What do you mean by that?—We understand that if there is more profit we are not naturally bound to give more wages. Although there has been a definite increase in the wages we are now giving them much more agricultural land than they used to have. The rate of work has also decreased.

F-4914. When was the rate of work decreased?—In 1921 or 1922.

F-4915. *The Chairman*: I understand that on this garden the payment of wages is made by the manager to the *sardar*, and the *sardar* makes the payments to the individual labourers. Is that the general practice throughout your Association?—Yes.

F-4916. Is there any possibility of a deduction being made by the *sardar*?—No, because every coolie knows the amount due to him and it is also done in the presence of an officer of the garden.

F-4917. There is no possibility of any deduction or commission being taken from the labourer?—No.

F-4918. The *sardar* distributes the amount earned by each worker in the presence of somebody representing the Company?—Yes.

(The witness withdrew.)

Statement by PHALINI, a woman coolie.

“I have been on this garden for six years. I have been here before. I went home to see my country. My husband is working here, also my sister. I have lost my father. My mother is in Ranchi. I first came here from Ranchi 3 years ago. I can earn more here than in my own country where I have only my land. I have no land here. I do not send any money home. My brother looks after the land at home. There is no bell to ring me to work in the morning. I go to work very early in the morning. Some of us do two *haziras* and others one *hazira*. I get As. 3 for each *hazira*, As. 6 a day when I can do two *haziras*. If I cannot do two *haziras* I do one. I did one *hazira* this morning. My husband went to work this morning.”

(GONDURA, the husband of the above woman was then called and examined. He gave evidence as follows):

"I did not go to work to-day because I was pitching tents for the Commission's visit. As a rule I do two *haziras* a day for which I get As. 8. Sometimes I do 3 and even 4 *haziras*. I am never fetched for work if I do not turn out. When I do 4 *haziras* I get Re. 1 a day. I cannot do 4 *haziras* in the cold weather but only in the rains. If I have land to cultivate in my own home in Ranchi I would prefer my home; if I have not land, I prefer the garden. I save nothing. I only earn enough to eat. I have not been ill, but my wife was climbing a tree and fell down and was laid up for a few days. I have two children. None have died. There is a school on the garden. The *sardar* does not treat me badly. I stayed here two years previously, then went home for 2 years and came back last June. I shall go back home again whenever I can in order to see my brother and mother and see to my land."

Statement by BUDHU CHIK (man coolie).

"I have just come here from Ranchi this month. I have not been here or in any other garden before. My brother brought me here. I have come here with my family. I have 2 children. I have come here permanently. I do not intend to return. I came here in order to get enough to live on. I have no land in Ranchi. I have no land here yet. I do 2 *haziras* a day and I get 8 annas. Sometimes I do 3 *haziras*. I never do one. I like the work here. Nobody told me that the Commission was coming. The manager made my house for me. I have no garden. I had no debts in Ranchi. I cannot say whether I shall be able to save anything here. Some men on the Estate here have *khet* land. I am a new man and have not any. The bell rings in the shed in the morning for us to go out to work. Now-a-days we do not work on market days. In the rainy season we do our work and then go to the market. My child is a girl and she is too young to go to school."

Statement by DANDU RAM (KBHIRWAR), from Ranchi.

"I have been here 18 years. I have not been back home since I came. I have my family here. I have no cultivation. I work entirely for the garden. The *sardars* have land to cultivate, but we have not. The manager pays the *sardar* and the *sardar* pays me. I want some land. How can we get it forcibly? The management gives it to the *sardars* and we cannot take it from them forcibly. My *sardar* has not got any, but the clerks, the *chaprasis* and the other *sardars* have got it. My *sardar* has about 9 or 10 men under him. My wife is ill now. She has a pain in her stomach. The garden doctor used to go about the line, but now-a-days he does not do it. He gives medicine when it is required. She had some medicine, but I am not going for it now. She did not get better for the medicine. We have had four children who have died. Two died in this garden and two died in the Tundu garden. We stayed about 12 years in the Tundu garden. We left Tundu garden when this garden was being opened and came here. We were quite comfortable in Tundu, but a great crowd came from Tundu here and we came with them. There was no land in Tundu, but I understand that now there is. The *sardars* do not beat anyone here. They abuse us if we do not work well. My wife has not worked for 2½ months and has not received any payment."

F-4919. (To the man's wife) Does the manager give you any food when you are not working?—How am I going to get anything when I do not do any work for it?

The undermentioned members of the Commission examined the accounts books of the Debara Tea Estate:—

1. Sir Alexander Murray.
2. Mr. Cliff.
3. Diwan Chaman Lall.
4. Mr. Kabirudin Ahmed.

Mr. Dibdin, Joint Secretary, was also present. The following is the account of that examination.

The attendance register for the month of December 1929 was first produced. The first name on the first page is that of Noya *sardar* who gives employment to

20 persons whose names are written under his name. Of these 20 adult males 2 did not work at all in the month of December and one worked only on 2 days. One of the *sardar*'s men Sudhua worked on 24 out of 25 working days. He was absent only on the 20th. He worked on 9 days one *hazira* only, on other 9 days he worked 2 *haziras*; on 5 successive days in one week he worked 3 *haziras*; on the first days of the next week he worked 4 *haziras* and then took a holiday doing 3 *haziras* on each of the succeeding days after the holiday.

Another worker Budhua worked on all the 27 working days and received 1½ *haziras* each day he being a water-carrier who brought the water on to the particular area where Noya *sardar*'s men were working. Another worker also received many 1½ *haziras* and it is explained that he is also a water *duffadar*.

The *sardari* muster roll was shown in which was entered the total number of men, women and children employed under Noya *sardar* and also the total number of *haziras* done by the men, women and children. The males entered under the name of Noya *sardar* performed 614 *haziras* in the month of December which at As. 4 is equal to Rs. 153-8. The adult females performed 832½ *haziras* which at As. 3 works out to Rs. 156. The children working under Noya *sardar* performed 39 *haziras* which at 1½ annas is equal to Rs. 3-11, making a grand total of Rs. 318-4, which is recorded in the *sardar*'s monthly pay sheet book as having been paid to Noya *sardar*.

It was noted that Sudhua, coolie, with 51 *haziras* at As. 4, earned Rs. 12-12-0 for the month of December having been absent for one day.

Under the head of Noya *sardar* in the *hazira* book for December also appeared the names of 33 women of whom four did no work on any day in the month of December while 2 worked 5 days only and another 8 days only and another for 7 days only. One of the women Munika worked on 26 out of 27 working days and has shown against her name 5 days on which she worked one *hazira* only and 21 days on which she earned 2 *haziras*. Under the head of Noya *sardar* in the *hazira* book for the month of December also appeared the names of 5 children 2 of whom were absent on every day. The other 3 were also absent on every day until the 13th after which one of them worked 14 days of a single *hazira* each. One of the children worked for 13 days one *hazira* per day and another for 12 days with one *hazira* each day and another for 12 days with one *hazira* for each day except one day on which 2 *haziras* were done. It was noted that Munika (woman) earned 47 *haziras* equal to Rs. 8-13-0. One woman worked 5 days at the rate of 3 *haziras*; another woman worked 6 days in which she did 3 *haziras* each day. Another woman, Rubin who worked all 24 days earned 12 *haziras* on 12 separate days, 1½ *haziras* on another day, 2 *haziras* on 5 days 3 *haziras* on 2 days 3½ *haziras* on one day and 4 *haziras* on 3 days making 55 *haziras* at As. 3 each equal to Rs. 10-5-0 for the month of December.

Another book called the Daily Report Book was produced showing the work on which the coolies are engaged from day to day under Noya *sardar* and every other *sardar*.

Of Noya *sardar*'s coolies 6 during the month of December on odd days performed extra cash payment work over and above the *hazira* and *doubli* work to which reference has been made. One of them Luiya who had worked on 24 days in December earned 2 *haziras* every day with the exception of one day when he put in one *hazira* only and also did cash payment work on the 24th, 26th, 27th and 30th for which he got 2 *haziras* each day; and on the 28th and 31st received one *hazira* each day making a total of 10 extra cash payment *haziras*. All this is mentioned in the extra light pruning work book dated 24th December 1929 on which day extra light pruning work was started. The other 4 men of Noya *sardar*'s men on work similar to Luiya's put in during the same days 8, 10, 6 and 8 *haziras*, respectively, on the extra light pruning cash payment basis. The cash book in Bengali language was produced showing the cash payment on the 24th for 14 *haziras* at As. 4 each equal to Rs. 3-8-0 which included the 7 *haziras* appearing in the names of Noya *sardar* above referred to. In the Sardar Monthly Paysheet book which was produced appeared the name of various *sardars* having entered in detail against the names of (1) coolies' pay, (2) *Sardar*'s Commission, (3) total sum due to *sardar*, (4) *Karcha*, (5) *peski* (advance to the *sardar*), leaving the balance still due to that *sardar* in respect of the coolies' pay and his own commission. In the case of Noya *sardar* the amount shown as coolies' pay in the *Sardar* Monthly Paysheet book for December is Rs. 313-4-0 which as above noted agrees with the *sardari* muster roll. The *sardar*'s own commission calculated at 1 pice per task done by his coolies is shown as amounting to Rs. 23-3-3 making the total due to him Rs. 336-7-3. Under the head of *Karcha* appears a sum of Rs. 160

which it was explained was the amount of advance made by the garden to Noya *sardar* to enable him to make advances to his coolies. Under the head of *peski* or advances appears a sum of Rs. 10 that has been advanced which may have been on any account either for himself or for the coolies. These two advances in the month of December amount to Rs. 170 which taken from Rs. 336-7-3 leaves a balance of Rs. 166-7-3 due to Noya *sardar*. We find that the clean cash book has been written up only till 8th January and therefore the payment to Noya *sardar* and other *sardars* for the month of December are not posted in the cash book as actual payments for December were only made on the 15th January. The payments are usually made on the *hat* day of the 2nd or 3rd week of the month following that for which the payments fall due. On referring to the clean cash book for the month of December which has been written up there appears under date 11th December 1929 a payment of Rs. 3,870-7-3 which is the total of the coolies' pay and commission for the month of November as appearing in the *sardars*' monthly pay sheet book. On the opposite side appears credit for *peski* or advances made in November and also credit for amounts advanced to coolies during the month of November amounting to Rs. 1,936-13-0. The actual amount appearing in the *sardar*'s monthly pay sheet for such karcha was Rs. 1,869-9-0 and it was explained that the difference was due to recovery of amounts advanced to labourers on the permanent establishment over and above the coolies working under *hazira* and *ticca*.

There was also a *kharcha* book from 16th May 1928 in which for the month of December there is shown in detail advances amounting to Rs. 160 paid to Noya *sardar*. These advances were paid on the following days: Rs. 20 on the 11th December, Rs. 30 on the 18th December, Rs. 40 on the 25th December, Rs. 35 on the 1st January, and Rs. 35 on the 8th January. It was explained that these advances were made on the *hat* days to enable Noya to make advances to his labourers.

The December *hazira* and *doubli* accounts were adjusted on the 25th January, but we could not see the actual accounts owing to the books not having been written up beyond the 8th January. Nor could we see any receipt for the payment of the balance of Rs. 166-7-3. It was explained that the receipts for corresponding amounts for November and earlier months had gone to the head office. Noya *sardar* produced slips for the past four months September to December showing the balance due to him corresponding with the figures in the company's books. Noya *sardar* produced his account book kept in pencil showing the total *haziras* done by each of his workers during December and the money due in respect of these *haziras* to the individual workers. His book also showed advances recovered and the balance due or fresh advances made when settling with his coolies on the 15th January.

The *peski* or advance book of *sardars* and others containing advances made to *sardars* and others was produced. That showed that Noya *sardar* had in July a debit balance of Rs. 621-8-0, in August Rs. 606-8-0, in September Rs. 521-8-9, in October Rs. 511-8-9, in December Rs. 506-8-9 and at the end of December Rs. 438-14-9 due by Noya *sardar* to the company.

**Mr. J. J. C. WATSON, Manager, Gandrapara Tea Estate and
Dr. M. KERMAKAR, L.M.F.**

F-4920. *Colonel Russell*: How long have you been on this garden, Dr Ker-makar?—For 4 years.

F-4921. What other experience have you?—After completing my studies I was House Surgeon in the Campbell Medical School. I am also a Medalist.

F-4922. How many in-patients did you have in this hospital last year?—42.

F-4923. What is your total population here?—(Mr. Watson) 1,879 plains people and 233 hills people.

F-4924. What was the total number of births during 1929?—8 hill infants and 65 plains infants.

F-4925. And the number of deaths?—9 hills people and 28 plains people.

F-4926. So that your death rate is about 17.60 and your birth rate is about 34.72?—Yes.

F-4927. What maternity benefit do you give to your women?—Rs. 25 in the year.

F-4928. How is it divided up?—Rupees 5 one month before the birth of the child, two lots of Rs. 5 for the two months afterwards and Re. 1 for 10 months after that. That is conditional on their bringing their babies to show that they are well cared for. The babies must be brought here twice monthly, and the benefit is paid out into their hands by a European.

F-4929. Do you give the babies anything?—Yes, they get bottles of Mellin's Food, Glaxo, Horlicks and anything that they require on the doctor's orders.

F-4930. Are there any milk supplies available for the babies?—Yes, we have a milk dépôt. We issue milk here to any child who is sick.

F-4931. What is the total quantity of milk which you use?—Anything from 2 seers to 6 seers a day. This last month 49 seers of milk were distributed; the month before, 72, then 58, 38, 42, 46, and so on.

F-4932. That milk is given to babies certified by the medical officer as requiring it?—Yes.

F-4933. Do you have to purchase that milk?—Yes.

F-4934. Do the coolies on the estate have cows from which they can get their own milk?—Yes.

F-4935. Do they use it or sell it?—They sell it to us here and we give it back to them. They will not use their own milk.

F-4936. What was your infantile mortality for last year?—It was 7 out of 73.

F-4937. Do you have very much malaria on this estate?—Very little.

F-4938. Can you explain why that is so?—I think it is because we are not cut up by rivers or ravines. The holes in the lines are filled up periodically and the drains are kept running. Also our water-supply is full of iron. It seems to act as a tonic.

F-4939. Do you distribute quinine?—Yes. In the rains it is distributed in the evenings twice a week—5-grain pills.

F-4940. Is there any difficulty in getting the people to take them?—Yes, when we first started giving the pills we found that the coolies went into the factory sucked off the sugar coating and then spat away the rest, with the result that we found our tea was being tainted.

F-4941. I understand you also treat all the lepers on the estate?—Yes.

F-4942. Have you been trained in anti-leprosy work, Dr. Kermakar?—(Dr. Kermakar) Yes.

F-4943. How many lepers have you got here?—13 under treatment.

F-4944. Do you pay them to be treated?—Yes, As. 4 a day.

F-4945. *The Chairman*: Were they suffering from leprosy when they came here?—(Mr. Watson) Yes.

F-4946. Why was the disease not detected before they were recruited? Are your recruits medically examined at the other end?—Yes, and inoculated.

F-4947. Nevertheless some cases slip through?—Yes, it is very difficult to examine the women.

F-4948. *Colonel Russell*: Do you get much hookworm?—Not so much as we used to do. There are cases.

F-4949. Do you give Chenopodium or carbon tetrachloride every year?—Yes, we give it to the carriers, to the men who are infected.

F-4950. Does a European medical officer visit the gardens once a week?—Yes.

F-4951. How many gardens has he to visit?—13 European gardens.

F-4952. What is the average period of time that he spends on a garden?—If there are any cases there he might spend an hour or two.

F-4953. I mean in visiting the lines and in seeing that every thing is clean?—You mean the average per week? Not more than half an hour a day.

F-4954. Your garden doctor does it regularly under the Medical Officer's direction?—Yes. We also have chowkidars in each line to tell us who is ill in the lines.

F-4955. Can you give us your total hospital and medical bill for last year?—I will supply it to you.

F-4956. *The Chairman*: How do you deal with still-births?—(*Dr. Kermakar*) They are entered separately.

F-4957. You do not enter them in the birth register?—Yes.

F-4958. But as a separate item as well?—Yes.

F-4959. Will you show me the register? (The register was handed to Col. Russell)—(*Mr. Watson*) This is the police regulation as regards all the gardens.

F-4960. When we made enquiry elsewhere we were told that they were treated separately and not counted?—(*Dr. Kermakar*) This is a police regulation which states that a still-birth must be entered under deaths.

F-4961. Is there no other regulation which says that it must be entered under births?—No.

- F-4962. Every still-birth is put in the deaths and is not included in the births?—We put it in our daily register book as a still-birth.

F-4963. But you do not put it in your birth register?—No.

F-4964. Which register do you put the still-births into?—Into my own record.

F-4965. Not in the Police records?—No, here is a register of births.

F-4966. You do not have any still-births in there?—No. (*Mr. Watson*) Still-births are not shown in there at all.

F-4967. *Col. Russell*: How many still-births did you have last year?—Four.

F-4968. These are shown in the deaths and not in the births?—Yes.

F-4969. *The Chairman*: Are you sure that your system of maternity benefit makes you aware of all cases of still-births?—Yes.

F-4970. There is no hiding of a still-birth?—No, I do not think so.

F-4971. You have not drawn the attention either of the Government or of the Police to this curious defect in the method of dealing with still-births?—No. (*Dr. Kermakar*) The Police do not know what still-births are. Here is a remark entered by them: “cannot understand what is meant by this.”

F-4972. That regulation is a district one?—Yes, it is Bengal form No. 2990. That is a register of births form. The register of deaths form is No. 2998. (*Mr. Watson*) During the rains when mothers are put out of work we set up a crèche here so that the women can go out to work without having to take the children with them.

F-4973. Who looks after the children?—An old woman.

F-4974. *Miss Power*: Do you find any difficulty on account of caste distinctions?—Not with regard to the children.

F-4975. The women do not mind leaving their children?—Not at all. (*Dr. Kermakar*) There is no caste distinction before marriage.

F-4976. *The Chairman*: Mr. Watson, what is the total population and acreage on your garden?—The acreage is about 2,500. The area under tea is 1,136. The total population on the garden is 2,100. The average working labour force is from 650 to 700. That is including shopkeepers, chinamen, clerks and everybody on the garden.

F-4977. Do you send sardars out to recruit?—Yes. We have sent about 70 altogether this year. Last year was a bad year for recruiting here. We had an average of 1½, that is about 18 new people. We can do with a very great many more. We can employ a thousand coolies a day here.

F-4978. Have you experimented with short-term labour?—No.

F-4979. Do you object to it?—I think it has an unsettling effect upon my permanent labour force. Also new recruits get bigger concessions in the way of clothing which other people do not get.

F-4980. Do your recruits come from one district only?—They come from Nagpur, Santhal Parganas and Madras.

F-4981. Is that run through the Tea Districts Labour Association?—Yes.

F-4982. You do not find that all the benefits which you give here put you in any specially favourable position?—No, I think it is the other way round. When I urge them to go into a hospital when they are ill they simply leave the garden. I am worse off here than some of the gardens who do not spend money on welfare work.

F-4983. *Mr. Clow*: Have you the usual system of paying one *hazira* at the end of the month and the rest weekly?—Yes. All the second and third and fourth tasks are paid weekly and the *hazira* in certain cases is paid monthly except in regard to those people who stipulate that they want to be paid weekly. In those cases the wages are paid weekly.

F-4984. Some do ask to be paid weekly?—Yes.

F-4985. How many?—They vary from 70 up to about 120. It is mostly among the Christian coolies.

F-4986. Suppose you wanted to pay everybody weekly: would there be any objection?—Yes, they would object.

F-4987. On what grounds?—The *sardar* says that if a coolie gets a small amount each week he will spend it, but if he is paid at the end of the month he will be able to settle up his account and will have a little money left for himself.

F-4988. You are satisfied that the coolies themselves object and not merely the *sardars*?—I think it is the coolies themselves. I tried clearing everything after each week but they asked me to go back to the old system. That request came from the coolies themselves and not from the *sardars*.

F-4989. Have you any *khet* land here?—Yes, about 800 to 1,000 acres, marked off in one acre and half acre plots. It is not all given out. We give the coolies a license to cultivate for nine months; then we give them a license for three months for which we charge As. 6 rent so that they cannot have conversion of rights. A family consisting of a husband and wife will get half an acre. If they had one or two children we might give up to one acre.

F-4990. Do they own many cattle?—The last census of cattle astonished me. One *sardar*, who has been here 30 years, has over 300 head of cattle.

F-4991. What is the proportion of the people having *khet* land?—Everybody who wants *khet* land can get it.

F-4992. Are there some who do not want it?—Quite a lot. Some of them can make more money by working on the garden. The *khet* land is 2 miles out. It is fenced in. I do not encourage them to go and live in the *khet* land because it is not so sanitary and you cannot look after their health conditions so well.

F-4993. Do you find that a large proportion return at intervals to their own country for a holiday?—It is a very small proportion that go. The proportion of recruiters is 70 out of a population of 2,000 odd.

F-4994. *The Chairman*: Does that figure of recruiters include all those who wish to pay a visit to their home?—No. Those who go on leave with permission get a special concession from the railway in regard to the fares.

F-4995. There is an arrangement between the Railway Company and the Planters' Association?—Yes. We give for a return of Rs. 13-7-0 only Rs. 7-13-0, that is a single fare.

F-4996. *Mr. Clow*: I was thinking of those who went home for a short holiday and wanted to come back again?—We do not charge the fare up against them. We actually charge the fare in advance account till the end of the year. If they are here at the end of the year we allow them the railway fare which they have paid.

F-4997. Do you pay them through the *sardars* or directly?—All the Madrasias (natives of Madras) and some of the Bilaspuris (natives of Bilaspur in Central Provinces) are paid individually. Some of the Santhals are paid individually, but the majority are paid through *sardars*.

F-4998. Why the distinction?—The Madras coolies are sent up in one's and two's and three's and I have not a headman here who can look after them. Some of the Santhals cannot look after themselves.

F-4999. *The Chairman*: Do you mean that they cannot count their money?—They cannot trust the *sardar*.

F-5000. *Mr. Clow*: Do you prefer to pay through the *sardar*?—I will pay in any way they want me to pay.

F-5001. Why do you not pay them all individually?—Because they prefer to be paid in family groups or relations. They seem to be quite content to be paid through the *sardar*.

F-5002. Is the land distributed through the *sardars*?—No, that is distributed direct. Each man holds his own quota of land for which we take his signature.

F-5003. Do you advance money to your labourers?—Any coolies who wants an advance can get it.

F-5004. What sort of sums are advanced?—We advance from Rs. 50 to Rs. 70 for a wedding and Rs. 10 for death.

F-5005. How is it recovered?—Monthly, without interest. A very small recovery takes place. There are a few cases where we take deposits from the coolies and give them interest.

F-5006. Do many do that?—Very few. I had one girl who deposited Rs. 60 and another one who deposited Rs. 100 in anticipation of leaving for her country. I give a good interest in order to encourage them to deposit money with me.

F-5007. *Miss Power*: You said you had 600 people working but that you had work enough for 1,000. How do you encourage the workers to do more than one *hazira*?—We give them a second and third task. They can complete these three tasks quite easily from 8 o'clock in the morning until half past two in the afternoon and earn As. 12.

F-5008. Do the majority do 2 *haziras*?—Yes. A large proportion do 3 and some do 4.

F-5009. What is the *hazira* rate for men, women and children?—It is As. 4 for men, with As. 4 for each extra *hazira*, and one pice commission to the *sardar*. It is As. 3 for women and As. 1½ for children.

F-5010. At what age do the children begin to earn?—In the plucking season if a child brings in its quota of leaf, 10 lbs., it gets an equivalent of one woman *hazira*, namely As. 3.

F-5011. What is the youngest age at which children are allowed to work?—As soon as they can walk about they start carrying manure and plucking leaf with their mothers.

F-5012. There is no age limit?—No.

F-5013. At what age do they begin?—On plucking at 3 or 4 years old.

F-5014. Do any of the young children go into the factory?—Not very young children. Children of 8, 9 or 10 years of age start work in the factory.

F-5015. Have you any school on the garden?—Yes, with a school master.

F-5016. How many children attend there?—54 out of a child population of 600 odd.

F-5017. What encouragement do you give the children to attend school?—No encouragement at all.

F-5018. Do you carry on any sort of propaganda in order to persuade the parents to send their children to school?—No.

F-5019. You do not pay the children to go to school?—No.

F-5020. What makes the parents of the 54 children send their children to school?—These children are the sons and daughters of people who have received a little education themselves.

F-5021. They are not your ordinary recruited garden workers from Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas?—No.

F-5022. Are they the children of the clerks?—No, they are the *sardars'* children or the *daffadars'* children or the children of people who can themselves read and write and who themselves see the benefit of a little education. Then we have a night school for the men. The men are paid two annas. A man recognizes that if he can read and write he can get as much money as by doing manual labour.

F-5023. *The Chairman*: Those are not the ordinary recruited workers, are they?—Some of them are—the brighter ones, not the really jungle coolies.

F-5024. *Miss Power*: Are you anxious for the children of the ordinary coolies to go to school?—I think it will be a very slow task.

F-5025. Would you be prepared to evolve some scheme such as paying a child at the rate of one *hazira* for attending one half-day at school?—I would.

F-5026. Supposing the parents were told that the child would not be allowed to do one *hazira* of work unless it had done one *hazira* at school?—Then we would have to abolish all children's work in the garden. Our garden would certainly lose all the children's work.

F-5027. Do you encourage any form of adult education?—We have night classes. Some of the people there are reading up to second English.

F-5028. What encouragement has been given to those labourers to attend the night school after their day's work?—It is such a small day's work that they do not need any encouragement.

F-5029. Are those attending the night school sending their children to the day school?—Some of them are.

F-5030. They are the ones who understand the value of education?—Yes.

F-5031. Are you doing anything in the way of education through cinema exhibitions?—Yes, we show things connected with malaria.

F-5032. How do the people respond?—The coolies are interested to begin with, but after they see it once they do not patronize it again. It is all given free by the Company.

F-5033. Are your lines on private roads?—They are all within the grant.

F-5034. Can anybody go through your lines who wants to?—It will be very difficult to stop them.

F-5035. Is there any scrutiny?—Yes. I have *chowkidars* in each line in order to keep off trespassers. The whole garden is fenced.

F-5036. Who comes under the category of a trespasser?—Anybody can come from the garden in order to go to the next bazaar.

F-5037. Supposing anybody came along ostensibly for the purpose of organizing your workers into a trade union: would he be allowed free access to your workers?—He would have to come along the Government road, but certainly he would not be allowed on the private road.

F-5038. Could he reach your coolies by the Government road?—Yes.

F-5039. So that there is one public road?—There must be a public road North, South, East and West on the tea garden. The Government demands an outlet North, South, East and West.

F-5040. Is that a Government rule?—Yes, We must leave lands for roads North, South, East and West.

F-5041. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Have you many children of 3 and 4 on your books?—If they bring a *hazira* they are entered on the books. But it is unusual to have children of 3 and 4. We make special baskets for them. In the rains we have 20 or 30 working on the garden.

F-5042. What *hazira* do they do?—They help the women in bringing the extra *hazira*.

F-5043. At what age do they generally work?—4, 5 or 6.

F-5044. *The Chairman*: They are working with their mothers?—Yes, they are practically with their mothers.

F-5045. *Sir Alexander Murray*: How many children have you on your books?—We had 44 working children yesterday.

F-5046. How many men were there yesterday?—There were not many yesterday, because they were all drunk yesterday being Monday.

F-5047. *Mr. Clow*: Yesterday you had 208 men and they did in addition to the 208 first *haziras* 341 additional *haziras*, 338 women who did in addition to their first *haziras* 193 second *haziras* and 44 children who had only one *hazira*?—Yes.

F-5048. You pay the women monthly not merely for the *haziras* but also for the extra tasks?—Yes. The women are paid monthly. The men are paid for their extra tasks every Friday.

F-5049. *The Chairman*: Is drink a serious evil here?—Do they drink the liquor which they themselves brew?—It is a serious evil here. They do not drink so much their own liquor as the Government liquor. It is selling cheap at 5 or 6 annas a bottle. They buy it and take it into their lines. But that liquor is more harmful than the liquor they themselves brew.

F-5050. Have you made any endeavour to restrict the consumption of liquor?—The Dooars Planters' Association tried to restrict this for years. We have certain restrictions as regards the brewing of country liquor. We pay a tax of As. 4 per acre to Government and we issue permits to the people who want to brew this liquor.

F-5051. In this district does Government raise its revenue by liquor regulation?—Yes, it does very much. I want that the rate should be increased in order to make it more difficult for them to brew their own liquor.

F-5052. Is it a serious evil here on the gardens where they employ primitive type of labour?—Yes.

F-5053. Do they drink here more than in their own country because of their higher earnings?—In my experience of the past 25 years the evil is getting worse. They are not able to do the tasks which they were doing before. They are growing weaker on account of this liquor habit.

F-5054. Is it a bad kind of liquor which the Government brew?—Yes, it is a bad kind of liquor.

F-5055. You made representations and Government took no notice of them? —I understand the revenue went down. We were asked to issue permits for brewing country liquor. We are actually contributing Rs. 278 a year as fees for our coolies brewing the country liquor.

F-5056. How far is the Government liquor shop from your garden?—A mile and a quarter.

F-5057. *Mr. Clow*: Do you suggest that Government has been pressing you to increase the consumption of liquor in order to increase the revenue?—No, they have lessened the price per bottle and that has increased consumption.

F-5058. Did they want to increase their revenue?—As far as I can understand I think the Deputy Commissioner or whoever it was fixed the revenue to be got from this item and we have to pay that. That is my opinion.

F-5059. *Mr. Cliff*: How many houses have you for housing your labourers? —We have 663 thatched houses and about 120 tin-roofed houses.

F-5060. Would it be a good thing for the tea industry if there was a Board of Health to look after the health of the tea garden workers?—Yes, provided the Government has one too.

F-5061. Would you, representing the tea industry, welcome a board of that kind for the tea gardens?—I would welcome anything connected with the improvement of the health of the workers. But it is very discouraging to find that when you try to do the best for your workers they take advantage of it and when they are on the road to recovery they leave the garden saying that there is a ghost in the garden and so on. All our welfare activities have not helped to increase the flow of labour.

F-5062. Is it not a legitimate reason for having a Board of Health or a committee containing some representatives of the planters also so that they may address themselves continuously to the welfare of the garden labourers?—If there is a system which is uniformly applicable to all the gardens it is all right; otherwise I will suffer.

F-5063. With regard to wage rates would you have any objection to a minimum wage fixing machinery for the tea garden labourers?—He can earn enough even now. If he does not earn enough it is on account of his laziness. I am willing to give my workers Re. 1 a day if they work for me. I would set them a 2 hours first task, a 2 hours second task and a $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours third task.

F-5064. But there are some gardens which would not do that?—Yes, they are so full of labour that they cannot give more than one task for each. But from our statistics you will find that only a very small proportion of the people work and they work for a very small number of days in the month. They work on an average 15 days in a month.

F-5065. *The Chairman*: Do you attribute that to the fact that when they have earned a certain amount they have no desire to earn more?—A labourer is quite content with what he earns unless he wants to buy another cow or goat in which case he works a little more.

F-5066. *Mr. Cliff*: How can the standard of the people on the gardens be improved?—The only way is to give them education.

F-5067. Would you oppose compulsory primary education for the tea garden labourers?—If that was introduced I should certainly support it because that is the only way to improve them.

F-5068. Most of the managers seem to fear any attempt on the part of outsiders to form combinations of tea garden workers into trade unions. Would you have any objection to an attempt of that kind?—I have not studied anything about trade unions.

F-5069. *Sir Alexander Murray*: Is there a big *busti* here?—Yes, there is a *busti* from here right up to the railway line. Many tea garden coolies live there.

F-5070. How much of outside casual labour do you get from the *bustis*?—We get from 30 to 50 every day. In the planting and harvesting seasons we get nothing.

F-5071. Supposing you had a Health or Welfare Trust you would have it confined to labourers living on the gardens?—Yes.

F-5072. What about labourers coming from outside?—In the case of epidemics like cholera and small-pox we will have to extend its operations to a ten mile radius.

F-5073. Do the outside casual labourers do more than those living on the garden?—Yes, they do an average of 3 *haziras* a day because they have nothing else to do, whereas our coolies have to go and get fire-wood, attend to their own lands and so on. They do little work in the afternoon.

F-5074. Is it a good thing to have *khet* lands?—Yes, provided it is properly controlled. Otherwise we will lose our land and the coolies will not work properly on the garden. Our ideal is to have a certain amount of *khet* land, not over much. We cannot have more than half to one acre for each labourer.

F-5075. *Mr. Ahmed*: Do you get labourers from your adjoining districts of Dinajpur and Rangpur?—No.

F-5076. Is it because they get more from their lands than what you will pay them here?—I cannot say. I do not know what they earn by working on their own lands.

(The witness withdrew. The Commission adjourned to Asansol.)

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